

キャラクターMAX 陽が昇る!

Tomo Takabayashi Presents

喬林 知

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角川ビーンズ文庫

lang="en">

Kyou Kara Maou - Volume 05

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Novel Illustrations

Prologue

Prologue[edit]



I'm hungry for love.

Let's face it. The moment that my sons grew taller than me, they never gave another thought to loving and honoring their mother, growing to be more and more like their fathers.

If I think back, when I married spouse number one, I still didn't have the bothersome position of maou. Gwendal's father was a man with a grumpy countenance. As a young thing, I was totally smitten by his dour elegance. He looked older than he really was -- looking exactly as Gwen looks today.

Spouse number three was the complete opposite: a young man who was easily

carried away into emotional outbursts -- just like an overexcited puppy, that you just had to pet. Although Wolfram looks like me on the outside, his temperament comes entirely from his father.

But the one that left an impression, was meeting Conrad's dad. It was a shocking encounter. We fell in love with each other on one of my travels, when I helped him hide from his pursuers. He was a human who had nothing but his skills with the sword, but I didn't care about his identity or social position. After all, love is the most important thing in the world, and it knows no distinctions!

But then, you know? I saw them. He had two tattoos on his left arm. They were the signs used by humans to mark those who have been found guilty of a serious crime and banished from their lands. He was a criminal on the run.

Ahh, the love of a criminal! How wonderful!

That's why I'm a huntress of love! As long as there is even the tiniest spark of energy in me, I will draw my bow. No one will escape my arrows of love!

Chapter 1 by kannnichtfranz

Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

Translated from the German edition by kannnichtfranz

Beta: Anonyskrit

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Note from the translator: I'll be posting one chapter per day until the whole novel is posted -- ten days. I'm excited! Happy reading! :)

Back Cover Teaser A summer job at the beach -- everything seems to be going well for Yuri and his buddy Murata! But like usual, when he comes in contact with water, Yuri will a) be forced to wear a subtle style of casual clothing, and b) be sucked into the Demon Empire by an undertow. And this time it's serious, because Gunter, Conrad, and Co. aren't able to stand at his side. He lands in enemy territory in the midst of humans preparing for war against the demons. Yet this war-hungry pack has tallied its accounts without the 27th king... and without Murata, who has also been swept into the foreign world.



PROLOGUE

The hunger for love consumes me.

But does that surprise anyone? My sons outgrew me, and from that moment on, they never gave another thought to loving and honoring their mother. Instead they grow more and more like their fathers.

At the time when I married spouse number one, I had not yet taken the heavy office of the Demon Queen. Gwendal's father was a man with a grumpy countenance. As a young thing, I was totally smitten by his dour elegance. He looked older than he really was -- exactly like Gwen today.

Spouse number three was the complete opposite: a young man who was easily carried away into emotional outbursts -- just like an overexcited puppy, simply

so sweet you had to cuddle him. Although Wolfram looks like me on the outside, his temperament comes entirely from his father.

My first meeting with Conrad's father was like a drumbeat that reverberated through me. We fell in love with each other on one of my travels, when I helped him hide from his pursuers. I didn't care about his position or the fact that he wasn't a demon. After all, love is the most important thing in the world, and it knows no distinctions!

And then I saw the two tattoos on his left arm. They were the signs used by humans to mark those who have been found guilty of a serious crime and banished from their lands. He was a criminal on the run!

A sinner by virtue of love! How wonderful!

That's why I always want to be on the hunt for love! As long as there is even the tiniest spark of energy in me, I will draw my bow. Nothing and no one will escape my love's arrows!

CHAPTER 1

Girl hunting -- that was the bait with which I allowed myself to be taken in by Murata. Because of that, after the Obon Festival I wound up at the sea, which was teaming with jellyfish.

Actually, I'm a self-declared pacifist: one doesn't hunt love, it's a gift one receives. In the end, the reason I agreed to it wasn't my sixteen years of life without a girlfriend, but rather the prospect of a paid summer job.

"Summer, blue sea, radiant sun!"

"And jellyfish," I added.

"Skimpy swimsuits, fresh air!"

"...and barnacles."

"At the beach, everyone can come across super-cool!"

"Even you, because half of your face is hidden by sunglasses! Are you sure you haven't confused this with skiing?!"

Heading out to refill the vending machines, the two of us ambled in the direction of the parking lot. While the wheels of the handcart fought their way through the sand, I lodged my complaints with Murata in irritation.

"And furthermore -- 'pick up girls or let them pick you up' -- as if! We slave away the whole day long in the beach huts, and then in the evening we still have to help out in the guesthouse. Why don't you let me in on the secret of when exactly we're supposed to have time to flirt with girls with this workload?"

Murata slanted me a sideways glance.

"The time factor is completely overrated. The most important thing is *passion*, man!" He easily dismissed my grievances.

Ken Murata -- the glasses type who had been in the same class as me at middle school -- shoved all the physically demanding work off on me and had a cushy job for himself. And it was *his* relatives who operated the beach huts and the guesthouse "Family M." Their solid management practice was based on one simple principle: one can hire friends and family and pay them very little. In this case, their choice was the son of a second cousin twice removed, who was in his first year of high school. But the fact that he did nothing but laze around all day surely wasn't what they had in mind!

"You know the two office-worker women staying in the Daisy Room?" asked

Murata. "They saw it yesterday when you fell down. No, no, they think you're 'completely sweet!'"

The rooms at the guesthouse all had plant-based names.

"And the three old ladies in the Sugarmelon Room were talking about how they'd caught a peek of you changing clothes. And you got a full 100 point score from the four men in the Mandrake Room!"

"Stop!" I managed to interrupt. "You promised me hoards of girls, all of whom were waiting around for nothing other than to be my girlfriend. You didn't say anything about old women and definitely not about men! And this is all completely aside from the fact that I'm not interested in matters of love right now anyway. I'd rather concentrate fully on having a great vacation job and the potential for a fat wallet at the end of it. There *is* one thing I find extremely odd, though -- how is it that an upstanding worker such as myself earns exactly the same amount as the expert nose-picker, Ken Murata?"

"Oh come on, keep your cool. You'll see, any moment some girls will be coming around the corner, and they'll see us as super-cool high school students."

I had long given up the prospect of an amorous adventure this summer. Girlfriend or no girlfriend, it didn't matter -- as long as I could generate enough money to fund my amateur baseball team. As for the romantic hopes of my buddy here -- that train had long since left the station.

Sure enough, Ken Murata, who trudged along next to me in his beach sandals, had actually bleached his hair. It was his new image for the late summer season, so to speak. His hair was now almost blond, and his eyes were covered by blue contact lenses. He wore a pair of coordinating blue sunglasses with prescription lenses. People who are nearsighted don't have it easy.

"What are you looking at?" he griped. "You know, there are baseball players

who dye their hair, too! That Matsui you think is so great, he's blond too!"

I almost answered: Well, that's the point, isn't it? *He is good-looking, that's why he looks good with that hairstyle.* But instead I just sighed. Murata isn't actually ugly. He has shrewd and pleasant facial features that accentuate his intelligence and personality. If he had a little more confidence in himself, he could get a girlfriend without bleaching his hair.

"The colored contact lenses are really too much of a good thing, though. And don't forget that you go to an all male school. You'd better be careful that you don't end up with a boyfriend instead of a girlfriend at the end of the summer."

"So what, who cares? In that case, I'll simply go out with a guy! It doesn't matter, I just want to be more popular, cost what it may. But that's something you don't seem able to understand, Mr. Shibuya Yuri, Harajuku Fuuri."

Yeah, it's true. My name is Yuri Shibuya. Literally. That's not even an abbreviation. The amount of trouble it's caused me in my sixteen years of life... But whatever; lately I've been starting to find it very practical.

"And what the heck were you thinking with this ancient plot device, wanting to snag yourself a girlfriend at the beach huts on summer vacation? That doesn't even work any more in shoujo manga. Seriously -- when it comes to women, you are truly the last great dreamer."

"Oh yeah? Well it seems like you think the girls are all standing around in droves on the baseball fields squealing, just because *you* get all riled up by amateur baseball players! I'll tell you one thing, Shibuya -- when it comes to amateur baseball, you're the one who's the last great dreamer."

"But I never said that girls were squealing on the baseball field!"

"What does it matter, anyway? If you were at home, you'd just be hanging out

in front of the TV, taking in the high school baseball tournaments. There's so much more benefit to being here. You're earning money for your team, and you're getting rid of that baseball-jersey tan that bugs you so much. So please quit your complaining."

I opened the door of the vending machine and pulled out a blue can. The sports drink was so cold that I could barely taste its sweetness. Murata pulled the snacks out of the box and stuck them in the vending machine.

He wasn't completely wrong. My baseball tan really wasn't all that chic. From the neck upwards and all the way to my upper arms, I was tanned brown. But the rest of my body was shockingly white. At the pool, I'd totally stand out, and not in a good way. Some guys on the baseball team I lead had even gotten the nickname "*himohiki*" -- like the long white underwear.

But actually, we were in danger of earning ourselves a new design on our bodies. A couple of people had looked over at us and stifled their laughter -- no wonder: we definitely looked comical.

"You can be happy your shoulders and back are finally going to be tan, but your chest, stomach, and the front of your thighs are going to remain chalk white. We look like two *doraemons*, practically calico!"

The beach hut uniform was a swimming suit with an apron over the top. A sweet young lady in this outfit would surely be a vision worthy of the gods, but we were definitely no feast for the eyes. Even so, the young female guests were constantly staring at our backsides. It bordered on sexual harassment.

Murata had practically reached fetish levels with his swim thong. For the first apron-display of my life, I'd rather my eyes had something better to take in. On the whole, the effect was more like a disguise than anything. I bet the view would put erotic fantasies into the minds of the ladies, though.

"Well, whatever, it doesn't really matter," declared Murata. "One is only

sixteen once, and the summer is short. And even the peacock decks himself out to prepare for a romance."

"Peacocks wear camouflage-colored swim thongs?"

"Dude, what is your problem? Heck, you've got a stone necklace bouncing at your neck. And you're running around the beach in a baseball cap! No one wears baseball caps any more. How would you like it if I were to start calling you 'Kyojin-kid' or 'Hanshin-boy,' hmm?"

"Yeah, go ahead and laugh. We'll see who laughs last when you've got sunburn on your forehead."

After I'd finished my drink and thrown the bottle into the trash, I fingered the stone hanging on my chest. It was a strong blue -- deeper than the blue of the sky. Under the UV-rays, the stone had heated up a little and looked a touch more washed out than usual. The expectations of the one who'd given it to me and the sad fate of its previous owner disturbed me. The stone was supposed to be a talisman, but I wasn't convinced that a weakling like myself was worthy of it.

"And on top of everything, I have to waste my time here."

"Now wait a minute! What do you mean, waste? The experiences gathered in one's youth are totally important. Who knows how you might make use of them later? There are worse careers."

No thanks. Not interested. I already have a career.

I, Yuri Shibuya -- a baseball boy like you find on every corner -- was at this point in time already the ruler of my own castle and empire. And I wasn't your normal, everyday type of king, either -- I was nothing less than the king of the demons.

Not too long ago, I was flushed away from a pretty unromantic venue into a fantasy world that would have made a great setting for an RPG game. There, I was surrounded by a troupe of unearthly beauties, who dropped the job of Demon King in my lap without further ado. I thought I was dreaming. But it was all real. Starting with my official appointment as King of the Demon Empire, all the way to the mountain of problems that had to be solved because the relationship between humans and demons was well past strained.

There were still moments when I wanted nothing more than to run away from all the responsibility. And I still have a lot of doubts as to whether I'm actually qualified for such an important task. I have only my teammates to thank for the fact that I haven't already failed miserably -- they've always got my back.

"Hello? You guys are from that red guesthouse across the way, right?"

I had let my gaze drift off in distraction, but as I heard this voice, I lifted my head.

I saw two female students walking towards us. They were a little bit older than us; they were holding onto each other tightly and seemed near to tears. Murata's hand, which had been busy refilling the bottles in the vending machine, froze. With a smile he replied to them, "Yes, that's right. Is there a problem? Did one of you get stung by a jellyfish?"

One of the girls was covering her naked breasts with her arms. Between her soft breasts a breathtaking valley coasted downhill. What could have happened?!

"My friend's bikini top washed away. Over there, by the grotto. It got stuck on an outcrop. You can still see it over there, but we can't get to it."

Dark blue with thin red diagonal stripes. And lemon yellow with yellow strings to tie it on. What am I talking about? The color of the bikinis, of course!

The girl with the stripes had wrapped her arm comfortingly around her crying friend. She had a belly-button piercing.

No wonder that bikini top got pulled off, I thought to myself. Anyone who regularly wears underwear that ties on knows how dangerous it is. As weird as it might sound, I'm speaking from firsthand experience there.

"Don't worry, the boys will take care of it," the belly-button-piercing girl consoled her friend.

Aha, so it was as simple as that, was it. The matter had already been decided without even consulting us. Well, okay, so I guess we were employees of the guesthouse and not regular tourists, after all.

Actually, for a patron of the guesthouse, we would surely fight our way through any grotto or the deepest jungle. We were immediately all for it. The fact that these two girls were really cute had nothing to do with it. Likely story!

"Well, then: off to battle!"

"Not quite, Shibuya: off to the grotto!"

The cave was bigger than expected. The dusky lighting inside made it the ideal spot for a cozy rendezvous. At this time of day, the water reached about hip level. To reach the grotto, for better or worse, one had to go through the water. On the other side of the grotto, a lemon-colored thing was hanging on a jagged ledge. There was only one problem: in front of the rocks, a red flag waved cheerfully in the water.

"Swimming is forbidden here. Looks like somebody didn't stick to the rules."

"It looks like about 20 meters. You can swim, right, Shibuya?"

"What, me? But it's forbidden!"

"Oh come on now, don't make a fuss. You know you're already a true expert when it comes to swimming in forbidden places. Have you already forgotten the dolphin pool?"

I had no idea what to say to that.

I dipped a foot into the water. The seawater was colder than I anticipated, and it seeped through my gym shoes. I twisted up my apron. Testing the rocky ground carefully with the soles of my shoes, I set off to rescue the yellow butterfly which had been left behind in the grotto.

"Shibuya, is everything okay?"

As I reached the red flag, the water reached up to my chest. With careful steps I crept nearer the object of my desire. I stuck a hand out towards the yellow fabric. Almost there. My very first contact with a freshly worn bikini. As my fingers finally brushed it, I was overwhelmed by fantasies that I'd rather not put into words here. The slightly warm, moist material clung willingly to my right hand. Wasn't this a good opportunity? Almost deserved as a part of my reward? Just once, to pull it quickly over my head. Who could hold it against me? Okay, okay, better not. Who knows what its owner would do to me after that. But just once, to snuffle at it a bit...

"Shibuya, come back! We want to get back to the guesthouse!" Murata waved his arms about dramatically.

Scraping together the last bits of my self-control, I threw my lemon-yellow prize over my shoulder.

"It's fine, simmer down already! I'm coming al-- urgh..."

As I was about to take my next step, I saw some sea animal right in front of my

foot.

"It had to be a crab of all things, didn't it?!"

When one steps on a live crab, the foot gets a hefty punishment. At least, that's what all the Japanese kids learned from the fairy tales.

The enemy began to threaten me with its brown claws, waving them up high. I executed a backwards evasive maneuver, splashed down onto my back, and submerged my entire body in the salty seawater. The bikini top that I'd laid loose over my shoulder floated up and threatened to drift away before my very eyes.

"Damn it, stay here!"

Quickly I stuck my hand out, but I missed it by a hair, and the bikini top sank under the surface of the water. It's not that easy to escape from me, my little friend! I fished my arm around under the water after it. Suddenly I was sucked deeply down into the water.

"Murata! It's a giant squid!"

All three of them were laying on the beach with their heads propped up on their hands. They all took up a "What? I can't hear you!" pose.

Stubborn as I am, I didn't consider for a moment letting go of the bikini top I'd won through my own sweat and effort. I sank deeper and deeper, until the seawater went up my nose and it became impossible to take any more breaths.

Four months ago, I would have inevitably made a great fuss and broken out in complete panic. But today I could maintain some small measure of calm, because I already knew what was happening. It must be the suction from over there. I was being called back to the Demon Empire.

Thanks to my prior experience, I knew that resistance was futile. One simply had to take up as relaxed a posture as possible, breathe deeply in, breathe deeply out -- dang it! A piece of seaweed got in my mouth when I breathed in!

"A question, Father."

"What is it, Yu?"

"Is there maybe somebody in our family who is anti-alcohol?"

"No, your mother and I don't hold ourselves back entirely when it comes to drinking."

"But then why is there so much alcohol-free beer in our refrigerator?"

"It's there for you, of course. Middle school students always feel the need to go behind their parents' backs to try cigarettes and alcohol, isn't that right? After all, kids are full of curiosity at your age. But unfortunately, alcohol and puberty don't go together well at all. It hinders physical development, weakens the brain cells and makes the child lose enthusiasm. That's why Mama and Papa decided to keep only alcohol-free beer in all the places you could find. I know it's cold comfort, but anytime you like, I can describe the taste and effects of real spirits to you with words! So, Yu, pay attention now, here goes: *glug, glug, glug*. Ask me now, right away -- wow, man is that good!"

In spite of these mean little games of my father's, I remained abstinent. As an athlete, I didn't want to put even a single millimeter of potential body height into jeopardy.

But one fine day, when I have presented myself to the entire world as a baseball player, I'll enjoy a bottle of beer without restraint. Ah, what a glorious image! I wouldn't refuse anyone the right to hose me down with fresh beer! Until it burns my eyes and fills my nostrils, until I can't breathe and have to cough it up... and...

"Gurgle... hmphaaaaah!"

Fluid pressed into my head, not just in my nose but also in my ears. It hurt so much I had to close my eyes. I tried to breathe but I couldn't sense a hint of air anywhere around me. I wanted to struggle, but I found I couldn't stretch my limbs out at all. When I rose up, my head banged against some kind of obstacle. Where the heck was I?! It felt like someone had locked me up inside a beer keg. And it tasted like that too.

Oh my god, could it be that it actually *was* a beer keg?!

I located a paper thin layer of oxygen in the vicinity of the ceiling, pressed my lips against the wooden lid, and breathed. Full of doubts, I kicked against the walls that closed me in. In truth, the thing was very sturdy.

I marshaled all my strength and threw myself to the left. The keg lurched to the side. After it had completed three full rotations on its rim, it tipped over. The violence of impact broke it apart with a crash. I found myself gasping for breath on the ground, in the middle of a lake of beer. I wonder if Momotaro, the peach boy, also felt like this?!

After I had more or less collected myself and was taking in my brightly lit surroundings, a few women immediately caught my eye. They wore ultra-short mini-skirts and blue aprons just like the one I had. They flitted busily here and there between the tables, supporting crockery-filled trays high in the air with both hands. The tables were nearly all occupied. Various shouts came from all around; I couldn't tell whether they were drink orders or sexual

harassment.

So I had landed in a bar? That was new. In the middle of the room, a group of people had clasped shoulders and were singing a song at the top of their lungs. In the corners sat men who preferred solitude, nursing their beers alone. Someone at the nearest table pointed at me and shouted, "Hey, look! That waiter broke a beer keg! Look here you, we could have drunk that!"

"Since when does this joint hire male waiters? Hey, what kind of a guy is that, anyway?"

The red-faced drunk guy stared at me. Shoot! I hastily pulled my cap down over my face. In this world, black hair and black eyes had a certain meaning. It could be dangerous to show them around casually.

"Well, son-of-a-gun, boy! That's going a little far, don't you think? Even dyed your hair black! I can understand admiring the king, but you better not let yourself be discovered by his bodyguards looking like that. They're not as understanding as we are."

Luckily for me, they thought I was a fan of the king -- so, as it were, a fan of myself. I was, so to speak, my own fan. This was starting to get pretty comical. But that thing about the bodyguards made me pause. Had some dubious organization been founded without my knowledge while I was gone?

"Your Majesty!"

The wooden door was violently ripped open and a man with crazy, wild hair came storming towards me. I sneaked a quick glance out the door; outside it was the dead of night and a heavy rain thundered down from the sky.

"Your Majesty, I do hope nothing has happened to you?!"

"Hello, Gunter!"

"Oh, what an overpowering joy it is to see you again! But what... how..."

From one moment to the next, his happily glowing countenance reversed itself. He became pale as ash, and blood ran from his nose.

"B..b..but why are you dressed like this?! You are naked! And you're wearing an apron!"

"Naked? Apron? What?! No, damnit! I'm wearing swimming trunks!"

"And why are you clutching that brassiere??"

Brassiere? Oh, he meant the bikini-top.

Lord Gunter von Kleist was the competent advisor to the 27th King of the Demon Empire (that's me) and he was the empire's overprotective schoolmaster. And he was, once again, about to break out in tears.

Gunter's appearance was so magnificent that one brief look at him stormily captured the hearts of women. But as soon as I came on the scene, he always drowned in mucus and tears, and his breathtaking beauty went straight down the drain.

The customers at the bar had begun to whisper: "The bodyguards! The bodyguards are making their move!"

"You're the one they meant by that, Gunter?!"

At that moment, a small shadow came flying at my chest. "Yuri!"

"Greta! What are you doing here?"

I lifted up the little girl who had, through various circumstances, become my

daughter. She had beautiful olive skin, browned by the sun, along with energetic eyebrows and long lashes. Her auburn curls were bound into two braids. I was definitely a smitten father, but she really was extremely cute.

"Man, Greta, you get prettier every day!"

I looked over at the door and saw Lord Weller suddenly standing there. Like always, he was calmness itself. I had never once seen him lose his poise.

"Hey Conrad!"



I expected him to answer me with his refreshing smile, like he usually did -- but instead, the second oldest of the three most dissimilar brothers of all time frowned. He pressed his jacket into my hand and eyed the lower half of my body critically. Then he gave some money to the nearest suitable customer at

the bar, who proceeded to pull off his pants.

"Here, put these on."

I hurriedly tugged the pants on without taking off my shoes. They were still warm from their previous owner.

"What's going on, Conrad? Why are you in such a bad mood?" I asked.

Conrad was, so to speak, my parental guardian and bodyguard in one. The blood of humans and demons flowed together in his veins. Maybe that was the reason for his more plain looks. In contrast to his older brother Gwendal and his younger brother Wolfram, with Conrad my inferiority complexes in this respect were held within limits.

But actually it was said that Conrad was more beloved to women than both of his beautiful brothers. He possessed the gift of being able to speak compliments easily, and had a 100% pure smile -- that kind of thing apparently went over very well with women. But at the same time I knew there were moments, even for such a friendly young man as Conrad, when shadows lay over his bright, brown eyes.

Since we'd been speaking quietly, the bar guests had resumed their previous activity: a true reveler had attention only for the glass in front of his nose.

"We have to get you to a safe place as quickly as possible," said Conrad.

"What? Are there problems again already? That's why you brought me here so rushed like this, right?"

"No, Your Majesty," said Gunter with an apologetic tone to his voice. "The reason is this: ...it was not us who called you here."

"Excuse me?"

"Well, yes, it's a little embarrassing for me to have to admit it, but ... wait, don't misunderstand me! Not a single day goes by that I don't long for your return. But..."

"We want assurance that Your Majesty is in a secure location until things have calmed down here. We thought you would be well-protected with your parents," said Conrad.

"Oh, so actually you didn't want me to come here at all?"

"At least for the moment. The situation here is fairly critical."

"This herd of humans -- sorry, among the humans of this nation worrisome things are taking place. From the information gathered by our spies... it is said the humans here have launched an attack against a tremendously dangerous weapon." Here Gunter had to take a deep breath.

"In this world, four objects exist that are not to be tampered with under any circumstances," said Conrad. "The men -- specifically the men of the superpower Simaron -- have managed to bring one of those objects under their control. This particular item is a box named *The End of the Wind*. If it remains in their hands, the humans will open it sooner or later."

"Through the opening of this box, all imaginable manner of calamity would be set free. It would cover the world in treachery, death, and despair," said Gunter.

"If the lid is opened even once, no one will be able to hold it back," Conrad added gravely. "The humans believe they will be able to use the box for their purposes. But they would never be able to control it; they are overestimating themselves immensely."

Lord Weller's silver-sprinkled eyes darkened for a moment. "Gunter, I hear

people talking outside who are not from around here. Let's be careful and go out the back way."

"I'll ask the owner if we can disappear through the kitchens."

"Yes, please do."

Conrad turned his attention to me. "Your Majesty, I know you must be exhausted, but we need to get out of here immediately."

"Don't call me 'Your Majesty'! After all, you're the one who named me."

As I spoke that familiar platitude, Conrad seemed to relax a little and seemed a tiny bit relieved. What kind of horrors must he be reckoning with, to show pleasure at such a small thing as that?

"I would like for you to wait in the other world until we have this crisis better under control. The priestesses have already gathered in the temple of the Original King and are making the necessary preparations to send you back to Earth."

"Surely you all aren't planning to start a war while I'm gone?!"

"As far as it is possible, we will try to avoid it."

"That's not good enough for me. Under no circumstances are you to allow a war to begin!"

"Understood. We will try."

Gunter was already in the kitchen and nodding at us. Although the cooks were busy with their pots and pans, they kept an eye on us. From their perspective, we had to look like a pretty weird group.

"Please don't forget your position even while you are on Earth. Always act with caution and be aware of your surroundings. Don't allow yourself to enter any situations where you might be forced to act rashly. When everything is sorted here, we will definitely call you back right away. But at that time I myself will be --" Conrad stopped. He had already opened the back door. The cold air and a heavy gust of rain made the gloomy night even more unwelcoming than it already was. After Greta's hood had been pulled up, we marched out. In this terrible weather, not even a torch or a flashlight would have been of any help. Gunter murmured some phrase, and then the tip of his nose began to glow red. I had to admit, that kind of magic could be very practical!

But it's not exactly the coolest method of providing light. Shouldn't there be some more fashionable alternative?

When we reached the tree where the horses were tied, Conrad swung up and pulled Greta in front of him on the saddle. Gunter and I also shared a horse. I tried to ignore his hot breath on my neck. After all, this was an emergency.

"This path leads to a church. If everything goes according to plan, you'll be able to make your return trip from there -- as long as the priestesses can prepare in time," explained Gunter.

A sharp draft of air whizzed past my ear. My wet hair moved very slightly in that direction.

"Your Majesty, watch out!" yelled Conrad, who rode next to us, as he reached his arm out.

In the same moment I heard his voice, I ducked -- trusting my instincts -- to the right. To my left I heard the nasty sound of flesh being split open. The body behind me went cold.

"Gunter?!"

The schoolmaster fell from the horse; muddy water sprayed up in high arcs. The red light from his nose drew a curved line during his fall -- like a lightning bug. The horse reared up and brayed loudly.

"Gunter! My god, this is my fault! Because I dodged out of the way!"

"Yuri, get down right now! Hurry, get down from the horse!"

I managed to jump down in the nick of time, just before the animal galloped away. I could see I was going to break my back on impact with the ground, but Conrad caught me deftly.

"Damn it, who'd have thought those guys would make it all the way here... Your Majesty, do you see that light? You must get there as quickly as possible. Don't even turn around! Here, take Greta with you!"

"But what about Gunter?" I staggered a few steps towards the fallen schoolmaster.

"Don't worry about Gunter! I'll take care of him!"

Conrad pulled me back forcefully. I grabbed for Greta's hand and ran for the glinting light. It was probably about 200 meters, but there was only white noise in my head; I lost all track of time and space. Conrad shooed his horse in the opposite direction. After he'd briefly laid his hand against Gunter's neck, he caught up to us again.

The orange lights revealed themselves to be torches mounted on either side of a doorway. The entry area was covered by a roof. We pressed carefully against the door; one of the two double doors gave way, creaking loudly. Greta quickly slipped under my arm, into the interior of the church.

"This is a church?" she asked. "But I don't see any statues of gods, or any old

man giving a sermon."

"It's okay, everything's in order here," Conrad assured her.

The inner chamber was bright and warm. Wooden benches stood in rows on the stone floor; several candles flickered in a candelabra. Honestly I couldn't see any difference from a traditional Christian church -- the only thing missing was the cross on the altar. Instead, in their place stood a shallow basin full to the brim with water, and a giant painting. A lavishly furnished chamber was depicted there but it was completely deserted.

"What a beautiful person," murmured Greta next to me, sighing. "Looks like Wolfram."

"Who looks like Wolfram? There isn't anyone in the picture."

Conrad slid a massive locking bolt into place on the door and approached the altar. That reminded me what a dangerous situation we found ourselves in -- and that one of us was missing!

"I'm so sorry, Conrad! What are we going to do now? They gunned down Gunter! And it was my fault! I shouldn't have ducked!"

"Calm down, Yuri. They didn't gun down Gunter -- that wasn't a gun."

"But it's... it's..." The words stuck in my throat; there was a lump there and I couldn't get any air.

"Please breathe now, Yuri. Everything's going to be okay. He's not dead. And it's also not your fault. We never expected that the enemy would have penetrated to the interior of the country. They must have an ally who led them here. Otherwise, they would never have been able to sneak through the countryside without significant weapons and cavalry. It was our mistake, Yuri, not yours."

"But..."

"Gunter wasn't hit because you ducked. In the darkness, he was simply the best target. Don't worry, he's not dead. He's just put his body into a state of suspended animation. That's why we could safely leave him back there. No one would go to the trouble of killing a corpse."

"But..."

Finally I managed to swallow the lump in my throat, and I looked into the eyes of my companion. It didn't escape me that the old scar over Conrad's right eyebrow trembled just a bit.

"You're not lying to me, are you?"

"No, I am not."

"But you *are* keeping something from me. You've been trying desperately the entire time not to let anything show. It must be something horribly important you don't want me to know about, right?!"

"What makes you think that?"

"Oh come on, that's my job!"

The demon stone on my chest became warmer, although it had to be wet from the rain. Hot and heavy, it pressed against my skin. It hurt so much it felt like I was being branded by it.

"The catcher must read the intentions of the pitcher and the defense and then come to a decision. I need to be able to sense the thoughts of not only my own team but everyone, no matter if friend or enemy, like the thoughts of the batter and the runners. I even need to guess the battle plan of the opposing

bench in order to give my people the right signs. That's my job, the job of the catcher. It's true that because I'm still pretty inexperienced, I can't guess what everyone's thinking yet, but at least I can sense what's up with the people who are close to me! So are you please going to tell me now, what's wrong?!"

I grabbed hold of Conrad's collar; the corner of his mouth twitched. It wasn't exactly a smile.

"All right, fine, I give up," he sighed.

"Someone's coming!" Greta suddenly cried.

Our faces spun in the direction of the doorway. Under the impact of a powerful strike against it, the locking bolt bent; our fortifications were about to give way. It was not possible for human bodies to have caused that kind of damage.

Conrad let his long sword glide out of its sheath, and he laid the sheath in front of the painting on the altar. Quietly he murmured something that sounded like an oath.

"To nothing and no one but the Original King will my sword return home."

Excuse me?!

"I've entrusted my sheath into the care of His Majesty the Original King. It means that I will not stop fighting until the Original King permits it of me. In return, he is to protect us. It's only a small gesture, to urge myself on, nothing more. Please hide Greta somewhere."

"And what about me? Don't I get any weapon?!"

"Do you see the Original King in the painting?" asked Conrad.

Inside the giant picture frame shone forth only the luxurious chamber of

royalty, unchanged.

"What are you talking about? Where? There's no one there!"

"It's a piece of luck -- you can't see him. Tip the water over onto the painting."

"What?! But this is a work of art! I can't do that!"

As an upstanding high school student, I could never vandalize any piece of artwork. But as my glance drifted to the door, which was threatening to burst open at any moment, I came to the decision to trust the word of the expert. After all, Conrad had endured enough battles to know what he was doing.

I carefully sprinkled a few drops of water from the basin onto the picture.

"Yikes! It lit up! What was that? A chemical reaction?"

"Don't be so squeamish with it. Just take the water and tip it over the entire painting."

I gripped the basin with both hands and tossed the water in a big wave over the picture. A pallid light spread throughout the entire interior of the church.

"Awesome!"

"When you jump through the picture, you'll be taken back to Earth!"

"Come again?!"

He wasn't serious, was he?

Bits of metal and wood whirred through the air. The front entrance had broken in. Ten or more attackers stormed the building. They cried out, wild and chaotic, but I couldn't understand a word of it. They all wore the same

clothing; the movements of their long limbs made their cape-like coats swirl. Their faces were hidden behind masks painted red and green. Except for the dark green color of their clothing, they reminded me a lot of the lurid monster from *The Scream*.

"Your Majesty, quickly! You must jump through the painting!"

"But there's no way I can leave you alone here! There are way too many of them!"

"You've got to jump! I can't protect you here, Yuri!"

Two of the attackers carried objects under their arms that looked sort of like weapons. Actually they looked like those superpowered dustbuster vacuums you always see on the shopping channels. One of them shook briefly and a fireball came shooting out with crazy fast velocity. It was bigger than a basketball by far.

Okay, so not a dustbuster, then. More like the opposite.

Luckily, the first fireball only hit the wall, but the second one whizzed straight in my direction.

"Damn it!" The power of habit had me a hair's breadth away from trying to catch the thing catcher-style. The smell of burning fabric abruptly reached my nose. The flames were sucked up into the center of the painting. A round, dry surface appeared afterwards and the glow disappeared. I tested the surface carefully with my fingertips, and it felt like your everyday oil painting again.

The other eight attackers kept coming closer and closer.

"Please! Do what I've asked you!" said Lord Weller, who still had his back to me.

"But the picture dried out!"

"Then find more water, quickly!"

Before he had even finished his sentence, the enemy closed in on both sides, and launched their attack with drawn swords. Conrad's sword parried a thrust. Fearing an attack from behind, I reached back to a door behind the altar to the left. It wouldn't open.

"Shit!"

The clanging of metal refused to stop. Again and again at regular intervals I heard the sound of a sword smashing into the stone floor. With the power of desperation, I kicked at the door. A hole broke out in the middle of it.

Outside, the heavy rain roared.

For a couple seconds, I was distracted by the sight of the rain and didn't pay attention to what was going on behind my back. One of the attackers took advantage of this opportunity -- his blade swung towards me. The air moving past it sounded like a shriek. Halfway through its path, it stopped dead. I spun around out of reflex and saw Conrad cross blades with the enemy. Dark red blood was flowing over his throat and ears.

At four points in the room, green heaps lay on the floor. This was the number by which Conrad had decimated the enemy.

"Go, get out of here!"

I wanted to follow Conrad's order and escape through the opening in the door. But my heel caught on some object which felt very strange.

It was an arm.

"Conrad?!"

I couldn't muster the courage to lift my gaze. I stared determinedly at this severed left arm. The fingers were still clenched as if they were holding something tightly. I didn't see a single drop of blood. The arm almost looked like a well-crafted prosthetic.

"Yuri!"

Shocked, I finally jerked my head upwards. Because of the backlighting, I saw my protector's back only as shadows. The left side of his body looked different somehow.

"Hurry, get out of here! It's too late now to travel through the painting!" His voice sounded gravelly and tight.

"Conrad, your arm..."

I couldn't get any further.

"Haven't I told you already, Yuri? For you..."

Although I couldn't actually see it, I knew that at this moment, Conrad had pulled his bloodless cheeks and mouth into a fearless smile.

"...I would give my arm, breast, and life any time."

It wasn't his customary friendly smile, but that of a demon intoxicated with the heat of battle.



I couldn't allow anyone else to be injured. Praying that no one was waiting for me on the other side, I plunged my upper body into the hole in the door. Heavy raindrops splattered in my face.

I pulled the rest of my body outside with my hands propped in the slippery mud. In that very same moment, the ground under my feet broke away. I slid downwards. And nowhere was there a branch in sight that I could have grabbed onto.

I turned around, but before I could call Conrad's name, a blast wave surged out the door, knocking it sideways. Nearly submerged in rainwater and mud, I looked back up. Flames and smoke were shooting out of the back door of the church. Crackling splinters and a fiery rain of sparks glittered and danced from the heavens to the earth. Their reflections were mirrored in the falling

raindrops. This effect doubled and tripled their radiance.

Like a firework, I thought, just before my sight and breath were choked out completely by the mud.

Yet someone still whispered a short apology into my ear.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 by kannnichtfranz

[Back to Chapter 1](#)

Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

Translated from the German edition by kannnichtfranz

Beta: Anonyskrit

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CHAPTER 2

He couldn't have cared less that he was standing in the rain.

His long hair -- so wet it was nearly black -- stuck to his neck uncomfortably. His scowling blue eyes looked more ominous than ever. The two soldiers he'd sent out as spies had returned, carrying the filthy body of the king's advisor between them. His dirt-crusted cheeks were white as wax, like a corpse that had suffered a torturous death.

"Is he dead?"

"No, it's only suspended animation. It looks like he did it to himself so the arrow's poison couldn't spread."

"Understood."

Lord von Voltaire gestured towards the church with his chin before entering the

shelter of the building himself.

On one of the benches his youngest brother and a girl were leaning on each other, shoulder to shoulder.

"Gunter has been found."

Lord Wolfram von Bielefeld nodded; his hair glowed copper in the light of the torch he was holding too close to his body. Greta's lips were clamped together tightly as she sat wrapped around Wolfram's arm.

Gwendal went slowly to his knees.

"What happened?" he asked Greta in a quiet voice so that those of his people nearby wouldn't be able to hear.

"How should a child be able to answer that question?"

His expression closed, Wolfram spun the torch, which had become unnecessary by this point.

"Who else should I ask?"

"But she isn't in any position to --"

"Yes, I am," the girl interrupted decisively.

"Then please explain it to us."

Greta began to speak in an agitated voice. She looked no one in the eyes or face. She didn't stumble or pause even once and barely took a breath, as if she didn't want to waste a single second.

"Gunter and Conrad hadn't expected the enemy to penetrate so far. We had to

hurry like crazy to get to Yuri. Nobody called him, but the highest priestess said it seemed like Yuri's soul was on its way to this place. The time and location were exactly correct. It was so dangerous they didn't even want to bring Yuri back to the castle first. They said that this was the only possible chance to meet up with him. That's why I was allowed to come along. They planned to send Yuri directly back home again. Why was that?"

"Because this country is no longer secure."

"Is that because of the weird box thing?"

"Mhm..."

Finally Greta looked Gwendal in the eye. Her energetic eyebrows and long eyelashes shook as she sought something at which she could unleash her anger. She had swallowed down her emotions; now she was breathing out more air than she was taking in.

"And then, then we went out the back door to get to the horses, and Gunter's nose helped with that on the dark street. Then somebody shot at Gunter and Yuri with bows and arrows. And then Gunter fell off the horse. We fled to this church, only the three of us. And Conrad, over there..."

She pointed at the painting, whose middle section had melted away from the fire.

"He said Yuri could travel through that painting that looks so much like Wolfram. But then there were these guys... Conrad defeated more than half of them, but... they had these fire-spewing pipe things, which they used to break down the door. It was so dangerous they made me hide, so I crawled under one of the chairs. Then Yuri kicked out the door over there. Maybe he escaped outside from there. But... maybe something went wrong... these guys... with the fire... they were shooting... at Yuri and Conrad."

Greta rubbed at her eyes with her small palms. "I got an eyelash in my eye."

"Greta..."

Wolfram held the torch higher and pulled the child to his shoulder. Gwendal laid his hand on her auburn curls.

"Are they dead now? Yuri and Conrad? Like my mother? And like Hube?"

Greta had spoken the name of her comrade who didn't seem to want to wake from his coma.

"Hube is definitely not dead."

"But he doesn't wake up and he can't talk. Is it my fault? Are all of them my fault?"

She stamped her feet against the stone floor. Her voice sounded like she was going to break out in tears any second. From the area where the doorway should have been, some soldiers gestured sharply with their arms. Thanks to the rain, the fire hadn't been able to spread very far. Nonetheless, the parts of the church that had been constructed from wood had all been destroyed. Bodies, or the remnants of them, would probably be found in gruesome condition.

Lord von Voltaire raised himself up. His steps reverberated though the building.

"If Yuri were here, would he say it's your fault?"

"No, Yuri would never say that."

"So it cannot possibly be your fault, you see?"

The back door led directly to a steep cliff. The spring rain showers had weakened the subsurface. There, where the bedrock layer no longer consisted of stone, an

avalanche had ripped away everything in its path.

"I've sent out a troop," reported a soldier. "The civilians of this area and all our soldiers are being mobilized. The search operation will begin any moment."

"Fine, you have the command."

Whether they liked it or not, there was no other alternative -- they would have to dig up the entire area.

His youngest brother had come to stand silently next to Gwendal. Wolfram didn't even flinch as the unpleasant stench of burned flesh reached their noses. A soldier was inspecting a charred black pile of cloth. "This is a human."

"Mhm..."

"That one there also seems to be a human. Judging from size, stature, and identifying characteristics, the body of His Majesty does not appear to be here. But if we assume there was an explosion, we really cannot say that with certainty."

"So there's a possibility that he survived?"

Finally Wolfram had opened his mouth. Gwendal was surprised to hear him speak in such a deep, calm voice, which one never usually heard coming from Wolfram.

"That's very difficult to say."

The soldier hesitated. He seemed to be afraid of speaking further as he carefully turned over a long object that had been half charred to ashes. As a part on the underside which hadn't been burnt came into view, the object became recognizable as an arm.

"Do you recognize this cuff link, Your Excellence? Could this be something designed specially for the ruling nobility?"

"It belonged to Lord Weller," was Gwendal's reply.

"That's Conrad's arm?" Wolfram pressed.

Again, his voice was quiet and cool. He noticed the strange look Gwendal was giving him.

"What is it?" Wolfram asked, raising his eyebrows.

"Don't become like me."

"Excuse me? Where did that come from?"

"Oh, forget it." Gwendal shook his head.

Then in a louder voice he called an order to the soldier: "Bring everything to the castle! Every tiny piece! All of the ashes, don't leave a speck of dust behind! But don't let them get mixed with the ashes of the humans under any circumstances!"

He grabbed his half-brother by the arm, ripped the cuff link from the wrist of the severed arm, and laid the blacked shell design into the younger man's palm.

There was a brief moment of silence, and then Wolfram began to howl as if a dam had broken inside him. Again and again he cried the names of his most beloved king and his apparently hated second-oldest brother, and he cursed the enemy.

That's good, thought Gwendal. At least you're able to give free rein to your emotions, like always. If not, how will our people ever be able to withstand this, if we really have lost our king?

CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3 by kannnichtfranz

[Back to Chapter 1](#)

Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

Translated from the German edition by kannnichtfranz

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CHAPTER 3

Why are you apologizing? What are you apologizing for? To whom are you apologizing?!

I couldn't get these questions out of my head. I couldn't even sleep in peace. My eyes burned like fire; my eyelids kept having little cramps as if I were undergoing severe torture. The lower half of my body felt unnaturally heavy. The skin on my arms and legs felt oddly stretched. It hurt as if it were sunburned. But I guess that wasn't really so surprising; after all, I'd been slogging away at the beach huts and the guesthouse to earn money for my baseball team. And how was I to avoid getting sunburned in that skimpy work outfit?

And then suddenly I remembered what had happened. I'd been sent to fetch back the lemon yellow bikini top that had been stuck in the grotto.

I felt the wet sand on my back; the wind smelled like the coast. The sea.

Slowly the rest of my memories returned.

As usual, I'd been washed away into the foreign world. As usual, I'd been rescued by my schoolmaster and my guardian. And I'd also gotten to see my most beloved daughter. She really does get cuter and cuter all the time.

I felt a cold wave hit my outstretched left arm. It came at me with a roar, touched me, and then pulled away.

"Gunter?" I called aloud. But no one was there to answer me.

"Conrad?"

I shook my head a few times; the back of my head rubbed against the sand. No, they weren't dead. They were both definitely still alive.

I had seen Conrad's severed arm. But then came the avalanche, and I couldn't follow what had happened to him after that.

He was most definitely still alive! Of course he was!

But why was I lying on this beach now? Hadn't I fallen off that cliff? Did I seriously have the monster luck to land, whole, on Earth again? If so, then surely any minute Murata would be bending over me and saying, "Oh, Shibuya, I thought you'd been washed away."

And then he would fling his arms around my neck so emotionally it would be quite likely for people to misinterpret our relationship.

But I didn't see Murata, or anyone else, anywhere. At least this time I didn't have to worry that someone was going to catch me in my string bikini underwear.

I tensed my stomach muscles and pulled my head up with a jerk. The ash-colored mud that had stuck to my skin had dried out and was cracking and flaking off. So

that was the reason for the pull on my skin. And suddenly I knew why my lower half felt so terribly heavy. My crotch had undergone a colossal transformation.

"W... Why the hell am I now blond *down there*?!"

A daunting clump of blond hair bulged out of the pants I'd gotten from the wino in the bar. And the clump was *giant*!

"Uuuh..."

"It talks! My pubic hair talks! Damn it, Murata, is that you?!"

Under the blond clump of hair hung a neck and a pair of shoulders. Farther down, a naked back came into view.

Murata propped his hands in the sand and swung his head up.

"Hurray, I'm alive!"

"Naturally you're alive! But what the devil was your head doing between my legs?!"

My friend pressed a hand to his forehead. Worry wrinkles appeared between his eyebrows.

"Hmm, I can't remember us drifting out to sea at all..."

"Drifting out to sea?"

"Shibuya, do you know where we are?"

"What a stupid question. On the beach, of course. We work here, or have you already forgotten?"

I did a full 360, looking around. I couldn't see one single beach umbrella, not to mention there wasn't the tiniest trace of any guests. Only sand as far as the eye could see. Sea and sand. There were neither vending machines nor shower huts. It didn't even smell like burnt yakisoba sauce.

"That's strange... I really should be back on Earth again..."

"Aha, so you're also all scatterbrained right now, Shibuya. Our little odyssey is not very likely to have landed us on another planet, after all. Hey, what was wrong with you back there? You kept sinking down, over and over, after you grabbed the bikini top. It looked like you had a leg cramp or something. I came in after you, to save you. Up to that point everything was okay, but then I went under myself and I got carried away."

Murata straightened his blue sunglasses. After he regained his full vision, he peered around at our surroundings.

"Hmm. Looks like a deserted island," he said, as if this observation cleared everything up and it was all right as rain for him now.

Groaning like an old man, Murata heaved himself to an upright position. He rubbed his arms as if the wind had given him a chill.

"Too bad we had to wash up on such a chilly island."

"It's no wonder you're cold. You still haven't got anything on but that apron."

"Not everyone can have such a classy leather jacket as you. Where the heck did you get that? It looks totally filthy. Well, whatever, we seem to be stuck here, in any case. That means from now on we're going to have to share everything with each other, got it?! That's the way it has to be on deserted islands. I'm Robinson, you're Crusoe! Understood?"

Murata's optimism was really astounding. While he plodded along the sand

dunes, he was already busy planning the construction of a shelter, how to make us some clothing, agricultural concerns, even what shifts we would take if we got hold of some livestock.

I loaned him Conrad's jacket so he would stop freezing. I bound Murata's apron around my back, so at least the front and back of my body were covered. There was still the question of where the heck we were. Why hadn't I returned to my original point of departure? Did I mess it up somehow, without realizing?

We crossed a hillside, our feet sinking into the sand. On the other side we could see houses that presumably belonged to some kind of settlement. It looked kind of like a seaside fishing village. Fishing nets and seaweed hung from the gutters to dry.

"So much for your deserted island."

"Oh heck! Well, I guess that's it for my cool Robinson Crusoe plan."

A young lady with a straw hat and laundry under her arm came walking towards us.

"Is that a foreigner? I can only tell she's got blond hair and brown eyes."

"Yeah, seems to be."

"Well, imagine that! Did we get washed all the way to Europe or something?"

It could also be America, so I tried English first. Following the rules of courtesy, I took off my baseball cap and tried to knock the worst of the dried mud off my trousers. Awkwardly, I raised my right hand.

"Hello?"

The woman's eyes widened, and she let her bundle of laundry fall. She pointed

her finger at me and whispered with trembling lips: "Bla... black..." She stumbled over her own feet in her haste to turn around and run back in the direction from which she'd come.

Oh no! I knew this reaction. The woman had recognized me as a demon because of my hair and eye color and legged it as fast as she could. That could only mean one thing: I was still in the world that contained the Demon Empire. And if that weren't enough, it seemed to be a human territory, which meant that even just traveling through was fraught with great difficulties for demons, since they are so deeply abhorred by humans.

"What just happened there, Shibuya? Is your fly undone? Why did she run away in a panic?"

"Now is not the time to stand around yammering, Murata. That woman is going to sound the alarm, and in the blink of an eye everyone will know we're here. And all that just because I have black hair and black eyes. Damn it!"

"See, Shibuya?! Didn't I tell you that you should bleach your hair, too?"

"Murata, you have to listen to me now, do you understand? We are neither in Europe nor in America. We're not even on Earth anymore!"

Murata's eyebrows climbed upwards and he looked at me bemusedly. He hadn't comprehended a word of that. But I didn't have time to explain it all to him. We had to get out of there as fast as possible.

"Step on it, Muraken!"

I stuffed my hair up under my cap and pulled it down low on my face. We ran along the coast in the opposite direction. A beach marathon might be ideal for strengthening the lower muscle groups, but I had completely different concerns on this flight. I had to box my way through this situation to get us out of here somehow. There were no friends in this region I could count on for help.

We tramped along for the better half of a day. As the sun stood in zenith, Murata and I finally reached the next city.

It was a lively harbor city built out of stone. The crowds appeared as suddenly as if they'd been summoned. Our highest commandment was: don't stand out! The first thing we had to do was find new clothes.

"Bare legs and a leather jacket don't exactly look decent."

"Well, the aprons you're wearing front and back make you look kind of questionable. But who knows? When we get back to Japan, maybe we'll find we started a new trend here."

Murata still thought we were just overseas somewhere. I dearly wanted to describe our situation clearly and put it all in perspective for him, but that was easier said than done. Who in all the world would swallow a story like this?

At least we'd gotten off relatively lightly with the trip here this time. We'd been spared the western toilets. Murata would not develop a phobia of public toilets or the habit of staring down every toilet bowl he came across.

"Murata, do you have any money with you? No, of course not."

"No, and you probably don't, either? Well then, nothing for it, you'll have to sell that thing around your neck and buy me some pants."

He tapped the fingernail of his pointer finger against my demon stone.

"No way, that's completely out of the question! This stone is incalculably precious! A treasure, so to speak!"

"Tightwad!"

Nothing else was going to work -- we had to find a job. And one that bumbling high school students would be able to master. Since freight ships were constantly arriving at the harbor, people to carry the goods were surely needed. Maybe there was even a work uniform for that; that would solve one of our problems all by itself... Hey, look at that! There actually was a standard uniform worn by all the workers in the harbor. And what a uniform it was! Just about every single brawny worker wore the same red uniform.

"Those are loincloths," Murata dazedly established.

Yep, loincloths. They gave an open view of the mighty and well-honed muscles of the workers. In terms of manliness, one could make a very strong case with those, but in light of our weedy bodies, we decided we preferred to stay clothed as we were.

In order to be allowed to work, we had to sign contracts. I signed for both of us out of necessity. It's true that the writing here was essentially the same as the demonic language, but since I'd only been learning that a short time, I was pretty sure my chicken scratches looked more like cuneiform.

"Murata, you were Robinson, right?"

"Yes, and you were Crusoe. But why do we need fake names?"

"Because it's better this way, just trust me. Now lend me your sunglasses."

"Why should I do that?"

"It's true that your colored contact lenses are pretty embarrassing, but they are actually exactly what we need. In this wor-- in this country, black is a bad omen."

"You sure are well informed. Have you been here before?"

"N... no, I haven't. I'm just really sensitive when it comes to things like this."



Since the blue sunglasses were fitted with strong lenses, I felt a little dizzy when I first put them on, and my field of vision was reduced.

"Man! I can't see anything with these!" I whined.

"Do you think it's going any better for me without them? Whoopsy-daisy!" Murata had banged into a suntanned muscleman.

"No problem, kid," the man responded magnanimously, and trudged on his way with his load.

His voice sounded older than anticipated. I carefully lowered the lenses of the glasses to risk a stolen glance above them. I saw a shriveled face, full of wrinkles and age spots, enthroned on top of a mountain of muscles. The guy had to be

over seventy, at least.

A closer look showed me that the place was crawling with older workers. Although the top-class muscles executed their work freshly and sprightly, their skin and faces were unmistakably painted with age. A muscle-packed workers union of old men in red loincloths.

As we stood frozen to the spot, a voice called out to us, "You're shocked, right?!"

That woman completely knocked my socks off: a perky old woman hauling heavy cartons. She wore a slip of a bathing suit that let an unbelievable amount of skin show. If that wasn't enough on its own, the color of the thing was a fruity orange that singed the eyeballs.

A head of white hair bound tightly together in a bun. A face filled with wrinkles that beamed with friendliness. Up to that point, she looked just like your usual grandmother next door, who cares for her garden every day. But from the neck down curved enormous, consummate muscles that shone with oil and sweat. And she had the voice of Kyoko Kishida! Totally dreamy!

"Ey, ey, two lanky little boys! You aren't from around here, are you? Even for wandering harbor workers, you two look much too scrawny."

"No, my lady, we're not from around here. Could you perhaps tell us what this city is called?"

"This is the commercial harbor of Gilbit. You now find yourselves on the southern tip of the autonomous region Carolia, feudal territory of Small Simaron."

Simaron!

I'd heard that name before. My memory might not be perfectly reliable, but the recollections I had of this country were really not very pleasant.

"Err, my lady, would you happen to know where we might find the Japanese consulate?" asked Murata.

"Murata?! Where the heck did you learn this language?!"

"Well, I'd really like to ask that myself." He turned towards me. "And Shibuya, since when do *you* speak fluent German?"

"I speak German? What, are you saying that you speak German?"

"Of course. I had German as my second foreign language elective."

Unbelievable. To my ears, his words had sounded unambiguously like Japanese.

"Ey, although you two come across awfully slender, you seem to be healthy enough young men. Lately, we never get to see young people around here anymore. You've made the eyes of this old woman very happy."

Then the friendly grandma's smile became grim, making room for resignation and hopelessness. "Actually this kind of work is more intended for young people than us old people."

Among the workers walking past us like a conveyor belt, there were almost no young men. Every once in a while there was a boy about 15 years old, but the distinct majority were elderly men.

"Yeah, that's really a shame. To expect the elderly to handle such physically demanding work. So, where are the adult men?" I asked.

"Ey, they're all serving with the army. There's going to be war soon."

"War?! Is there trouble with America?!" exclaimed Murata.

"They will join in the battle against the demons."

The shock I suffered in that moment was unimaginable. War with the demons?! But I had fought so long and hard for unconditional pacifism. You step away for just the tiniest moment, and already something like this happens. Had the Demon Empire taken leave of their senses?

"Simaron's goal is to conquer the entire world. Just like back then, when they subdued Carolia. They want to put together a massive army. And they're said to have gotten their hands on a formidable weapon."

The old woman narrowed her eyes.

"Ey, they're going to do exactly the same thing they did before, when I was just a young thing. I don't understand it at all. What is so attractive about controlling more and more territory? Dear me, dear me."

"Don't worry yourself about it, there isn't going to be a war. It's true that I can't speak for Simaron, but the demons are not going to participate in any war. I would never allow something as atrocious as that!"

"Hey, Shibu-- I mean, Crusoe. You can't go around making such frivolous statements in the name of foreign countries. That could lead quickly to an international crisis!"

The old lady observed us as if she were watching her own grandkids.

"Ey, how wonderful that would be, if our children came back home soon. Actually, we're against war here. But when we're ordered to send soldiers, there's no way for us to protect ourselves against it. Oh dear, oh dear... It might still come to that, just like back sixty years ago."

The old lady gave a small smile.

"A thousand years ago, it was better. My oh my, if only the strong and gracious

folk who once held sovereignty over this land would return! Then we wouldn't be what we are today: Simaron's storeroom."

Suddenly a thunderous noise sounded from the bell tower. Shocked to death, I spun around and saw how thick smoke was rising out of the crenellations. The anchored ships fired their canons; the harbor was filled with explosions.

"What?! Is it already happening? Damn it!"

"Don't panic, Shibuya! The first thing we have to do is turn off the main gas line!"

The workers laid down their wares and walked one after the other across the docks towards safety. They all went at the same quiet tempo; not a single one of them lost their composure.

A thin old man winked at us happily. "Hey, you two boys, lunch is served!"

"I see. So that was just the signal for break time."

We received our lunch tickets and joined the lunch line with the other workers.

The building before us, into which masses of people were flowing, reminded me more of a restaurant than a staff cafeteria. Numerous tables were arranged along whitewashed bright green walls. The chairs gradually being occupied by all the people were painted in the same cinnamon red as the window frames.

The system functioned like this: you stuck out your tray and the hostesses filled it up high with your meal. At the end you also got a sizable slice of bread and a light colored drink that looked like milk.

"Oh, but you young boys are really very thin! Come, let me give you another proper serving of goat milk."

"Goat milk?"

"Yes, indeed. If you drink generously of it, you'll see: by this time next year, you'll have grown a great deal!" the hostess winked encouragingly at us.

In one hand she held a cup, in the other a serving ladle. Her lips were adorned with a goat milk mustache, and her orange hair hung low on her back. She too possessed a robust and well-built body. Her larynx rose and fell along with her smoky voice, which would have served her well in any jazz cellar. If you listened carefully, she spoke no dialect; her speech patterns sounded more like the big city. She was younger than all the others around, and since she didn't look half bad, she was guaranteed every man's sweetheart. Personally I would much rather have seen her without the make-up, which was rather too thick, and I would've supplied her with a baseball bat rather than a serving ladle. She would definitely have hit tons of home runs.

Hey wait a minute, where was Murata all of a sudden?

"Your companion is sitting over there," the hostess said.

Well, that's just super. I stopped watching him for just a moment, and already Murata was sunk deep in conversation with a courtly suitor: silver-haired with a walrus mustache. In spite of having the soft facial features of a gentleman, from the neck down he wore the red loincloth that left a very open view of his gray chest hair.

"Mura -- Robinson! You shouldn't just walk away like that."

"Crusoe, you're just in time! I've just asked this gentleman about the consulate."

Mr. Graybreast looked up at me. "Hey, look here, you two! Even if you go there, it won't accomplish anything. Sir Norman doesn't receive any visitors, not a single soul."

"Well, it's not like we have to speak with the boss straight away. It'll be fine if

anyone in the office can help us with our request."

Mr. Graybreast kept talking even while drinking his milk, with white droplets hanging in his beard. "You should know that Sir Norman suffered a bad fever as a child. To hide his terrible scars, he wears a silver mask."

Sort of like *The Man in the Iron Mask*. I'd already seen that film.

"After Sir Norman's carriage accident three years ago, he doesn't even leave the house any more. But if you listen to the rumors, he can still walk just as well as before, and he's said to lead a normal life in his castle. We're all praying for a quick recovery, so he can show himself to the people again. Such a good leader doesn't come around often. We hope Sir Norman can prevent our children and grandchildren from having to go to war."

If this Norman really was against the war, then getting help from him might be in the realm of possibility. Perhaps he could at least issue us passports. As long as our true hair and eye color and my identity weren't on them, of course.

A middle-aged man came tearing inside. "Everybody listen up! There's terrible news!" His head was wrapped in a cloth pirate-style, but from the neck down he wore the outfit of a traditional seaman: a sailor suit. Finally, a man who didn't wander around half-naked.

"Horrible news! A buddy of mine just got wind of it! Simaron is said to have sent an envoy to us!"

The harbor workers as well as the hostesses fell into a panic. Jumbled voices exposed the resentment they felt towards their colonial power.

"What are we supposed to do now? Dear me!"

"Will there really be war now?"

"Why do our young people have to bite the dust for these guys, eh?"

"Is it still even possible for Sir Norman to prevent this thing?"

Murata shoveled down the rest of his lunch, squinted cross-eyed in his nearsightedness, and adopted a serious expression.

"We should get out of here as fast as possible. Things could go bad for us if we get sucked into this."

"Mhm..."

But unfortunately, it wasn't as simple as he thought it was. We were already sunk knee-deep in this. After all, the potential opponent of these people was my own country.

The hostess from before walked up to us silently and topped off our glasses. Looking at me sideways, she tugged her blue eyes into a smile.

"Here you go, boys. At times like this, goat milk is just the thing. It doesn't just help you grow, it even helps heal your anger and fears."

At that point, a health drink of that nature sounded really, really good to me.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4 by kannnichtfranz

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Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

Translated from the German edition by kannnichtfranz

Beta: Anonyskrit

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CHAPTER 4

Given the breathtaking beauty that lay exposed before them, no one dared to speak. Face white as wax; bloodless rose-colored lips. Eyelids adorned with long lashes concealing eyes filled with worry.

Truly this figure with its hands clasped over its chest looked like Sleeping Beauty, yet Lord Gunter von Kleist was a proven man. Even in the farthest corners of the world, one would never find such a perfect corpse a second time.

Yet he did have one critical flaw: "He's not dead. So, unfortunately, I cannot cut his body open to take a peek inside."

Everyone present shivered as they heard those words. When it came to spreading fear and horror, no one could hold a candle to her: Lady Anissina von Kavernikov, one of the three nightmares of the Demon Empire, propped her hands on her hips and said self-importantly, "But at least this way I can prevent the poison from spreading further in his body. We can't rely on the suspended

animation that Gunter himself brought about. But don't worry, with my knowledge and abilities, this matter will be resolved in no time."

Gunter had been laid in a coffin filled with ice. The areas surrounding him were all filled with powdery snow. The whole thing was reminiscent of the fish counter in a supermarket.

"What do you think? Isn't he a real work of art, this Snow-Gunter?" Anissina asked.

"Was it really necessary for him to be completely naked?" Gwendal asked.

"It's all a question of aesthetics. And I've already taken care of the area that always gives you men reason to be ashamed and worried. Look here."

Anissina pointed her finger at a small mound of snow. She probably would have liked to decorate the top of it with a fig leaf.

"Gwendal, what are you doing?!"

Without realizing he was doing it, Lord von Voltaire had formed a rabbit out of the snow. He'd been about to reach out his hand to place it on Gunter's groin region. This was intended less as an act of friendship and much more as a chivalrous gesture of sympathy.



Anissina was tired. No wonder; after an evening when she'd experimented late into the night, she'd been pulled out of a deep sleep to care for the man in suspended animation. A whole day without sleep had passed since then.

The measures Anissina had undertaken so far included the following: the application of a synthetic antivenin (result: ineffective), stomach pumping (result: catastrophic), and a deworming treatment (result: unknown). Whatever had caused the poison to stop spreading could not be determined with certainty, but the contents of Gunter's stomach had brought a few interesting facts to light.

Lord von Kleist's last supper had been a shrimp dish. According to the analysis, he had even eaten the hard tails. Apparently, as long as he believed himself to be unobserved, he had an inclination towards laziness.

The result of all this research was that there was finally evidence at hand indicating what sort of poison they were dealing with, and how the detoxification should proceed.

Exhaustion was written all over Anissina's face, yet her bright blue eyes shone with intelligence and sparked with curiosity and enthusiasm for her research. In moments like these, she was so beautiful it sent a cold shiver down everyone's back. Yet none of the men standing around ever dared come too close.

"We appear to be dealing with the Wincott Poison," Anissina said.

"What is the Wincott Poison?" Gwendal asked.

"I haven't the slightest intention to try to convince you, after all these years, to do something about your lack of knowledge. Still, you'd think someone in your position would at least have read *The Handbook of Murder by Poison*. No matter when and where it might be when someone takes aim at your life, with the knowledge from this book, you would be prepared to maintain your self-control and free will whatever the situation."

"There's a handbook?!"

"Of course! It contains information about poisons and their symptoms throughout the ages and continents. All deaths by poison and the relevant circumstances are recorded down to the finest detail. Even just for casual reading, it has high entertainment value." Anissina ran her fingers lovingly over the cover of a thick violet book on the table. "There are 257 articles in this book on the Wincott Poison. In earlier times, it was used not only by demons, but also by the ruling families among the humans. Especially famous are the cases of *The Evil Princess of Godlan* and *The Pirate King of Kisilis*. The purification of this poison has always proven to be difficult. That's why, for the last 300 years, it's only been found in the place where it was originally created."

"Is there any relation to our Lord von Wincott?"

"And how!"

"Impossible!"

Lord von Voltaire's ill-tempered blue eyes sparked ice cold with fury.

"There's an assassin in the Wincott family!"

"No, Gwendal. Listen carefully when someone is talking to you. What I said was that it only exists in the place where it was originally created. After the Wincott family came to this region, they renounced the murders. Even though they'd been driven out of their old homeland and betrayed by their own people. Everything that they owned had been taken away from them, yet they never acted on their anger towards those ungrateful humans even once."

"It wasn't any different for us."

"That is true."

Effortlessly, Anissina lifted the heavy book high with one hand and set it on the rim of the coffin. Her crossed legs trembled a little.

"That's exactly the reason I want to get back as much as we can. All those powers we possessed before we were ever called by the name *demons*." She threw her hair back with a swing. "All the knowledge and the technologies we had to leave behind, and which we've forgotten. The original homeland of the Wincott's belongs to Simaron now. The idea that that country is responsible for the attack seems obvious."

"Yes, no doubt about it."

"You can rest assured in leaving Gunter's cure to me."

Anissina swung towards the chest of her childhood friend, and smiled as his step faltered.

"Keep an eye on Wolfram. The way I judge his condition now, it's only a matter of time until he takes off for Simaron. All his blood shoots straight to his head when it comes to His Majesty."

"You should get some rest."

"When I've got my hands on this once-in-a-lifetime test subject?! No wonder you never make any intellectual progress. How foolish it would be to waste my precious time right now by sleeping when there's such a wonderful opportunity at hand to satisfy my intellectual curiosity!"

Without managing a single coherent thought, I passed a wasted afternoon carrying loads at the docks. The heat was not as intense as it had been back at the beach, but the condition of my exhausted body combined with the meditative silence in my brain lead to hallucinations: I felt as if I were on the playing field at the height of summer, training by running from one base to the next. I wasn't sixteen yet; in the third year of middle school, I was still on the school team. I hadn't been thrown off the team for letting the coach have it. Along with my underclassmen teammates, I spent my last baseball season of middle school full of enthusiasm. We lost in the semi-finals of the state championship in a close game. And even though I was only a pinch hitter, I howled with disappointment. But of course that kind of summer was just a dream.

In reality, I had punched the coach and left the team before summer vacation. After that I began my life as an ordinary upperclassman. I kept myself away from baseball and tried very hard not to even think about it. I couldn't let go of it emotionally, though; it was miserable.

If I'd only held my anger in check back then, I'd probably be a rookie player on the high school baseball team now. And maybe, if I'd spent every day in training since the early spring, from dusk till dawn, maybe I would never have been flushed away to this world in the first place? Then I also wouldn't have this fear for my friends' lives, and the terrible worries of a foreign country wouldn't rob me of sleep at night.

"Shibuya!"

"Hm? What is it?"

"We've got to get in line! Otherwise we won't get paid."

As I came back to myself, I realized the temperature had fallen. The gently swaying waves mirrored an impressive sunset. The sea was doused with orange light; the heavens glowed purple.

We took the money we were due from the work we'd accomplished and secured ourselves some new clothing. We also bought undershirts and jackets so we'd be prepared for the sudden cold that could come after sundown.

The harbor workers were freed from their identical work uniforms. Some carried groceries home, others streamed into the same restaurant from lunch. Presumably it served as a bar in the evenings. Turning our backs to the harbor, Murata and I set off down a street paved with large stones. Houses with faded yellow paint were lined up one after the other to either side of us. In front of the entryways, skinny kids and dogs sat on stone steps. To my relief, they did give the impression of being healthy.

"Excuse me, where can we find the Japanese consulate?" Murata asked the residents over and over, but no one could help him. No wonder, since there was no Japanese consulate in this country -- there wasn't even a country called Japan in this world!

With a heavy heart, I waited for the right moment to let the cat out of the bag.

"Man, there really doesn't seem to be a Japanese consulate here at all! But we *are* in a small town that I've never seen on any map before. Makes sense that there's no Japanese community here. It doesn't matter, we'll just have to look for protection from another country. America, England, Germany, whatever."

"I have to tell you something, Murata."

"Hmm?"

"Don't take it too hard if we don't find any help at all in the end."

Murata snorted. "That's coming from you? You're the one that's been moping around the entire time. Okay, so they're not going to throw us a welcome party, but at least they could notify the Japanese officials. And if not, we'll just have to take matters into our own hands. They would surely have to let us make one telephone call."

"And if they have no telephones?"

"Then we'll just send a telegram. And if that still doesn't work, we can just keep working at the harbor until somebody picks us up. By the end of summer vacation, our muscles will have turned to steel and everybody will mistake us for models. Then we'll publish books about our odyssey and turn into stars overnight! And all the girls will only have eyes for us!"

We made a left turn and the houses, kids, and dogs gradually thinned out. The sky had become fully dark and the warm evening sea breeze wasn't blowing on us any more. All around us, there were only meadows and fields. For lighting, we had half of a moon. It lit the straight path, upon which wagon wheels had left their mark.

"Hey, there was a light back there just now," I exclaimed.

"Really? Where?"

In the distance, countless small lights flickered. We identified the outline of a European style building. Judging from the size, it was somewhere between a manor house and a castle. The light came from the illuminated windows and the torches carried by the guards and gatekeepers.

"When you seek shelter in an old manor house with European architecture, it's guaranteed that some horrific murders took place there in the past, right?"

"Murata, you've played too much *Kamaitachi no Yoru*."

"You may be right."

As we reached the outside of the fence, the building turned out to be larger than expected. Running full out, it would take a good thirty seconds to get from the gate to the front entrance. Right after I'd absentmindedly taken hold of the iron bars of the fence with both fists, a guard with an arrogant face seized me by the wrist.

"Hey you!"

"Yes?"

"What do you want with our prince?"

"We've been told this is where the consulate is," Murata answered. "We're Japanese. Unfortunately we've been stranded here. We washed on shore at the harbor of Gilbit. We just wanted to ask whether the ambassador could help us get back home again."

"Ambassador? Who's that supposed to be? This is the estate of Norman Gilbit, Prince of Gilbit, autonomous region of Carolia, feudal territory of Small

Simaron."

"Yeah, exactly. He's that important man who has withdrawn completely from public life, right? Don't worry, we won't bother him. It'll be more than enough if we can just speak with one of his staff members."

"Sir Norman doesn't receive any guests, especially not any youngsters from the common folk."

The light from the torches fell on the soldier's face, on which no real facial hair was yet growing. He was taller than we were, but much lankier than the old musclemen we'd plodded around with all day. Apparently this was where the young people, whose absence had been lamented by the harbor workers, were serving their military service.

"Get out of here and back to the city before we throw you out!"

"But I already said we'd be happy to speak with just a staff member!"

"Murata, don't!"

I tugged him away a few steps by the arm. Nothing else was going to work; I was going to have to tell him the truth at last. But where should I start?

"Listen, I haven't had a chance to explain it all properly yet, but the thing is, we're in another world here, man!"

I had problems finding the right words and stomped my feet against the ground. Each time it was jostled, my demon stone tapped me lightly on the chest. It was almost as if it wanted to console me.

The gaze of one of the guards inside the fence fixed on my demon stone. Shoot! I grabbed the demon stone in my hand to hide it. This guard, who looked a little older than the gate guard, gestured to us.

"You there! Come over here a moment."

The soldier stuck his hand through the iron bars. He asked me for permission and balanced the stone on the palm of his hand.

"I'm not going to take it away from you, boy. Ey, where did you get this, then? The metalwork here on the setting looks damn similar to a very important coat of arms."

"That's a treasure that belongs to his family!" Murata quickly began to babble. "It's a family heirloom, passed down from generation to generation. It's always inherited by the eldest son."

"Ey, then you're a descendant of the Wincott family, hm?!"

Who would have thought I'd come across Julia's family name here, so far abroad? As far as I could recall, I'd only been introduced to the head of the Wincott family once. I think he was supposed to have been Julia's older brother. But I really couldn't remember his face at all. Probably because he was always looking at the ground. That's because when we were introduced, I was standing on a stage as the brand new Demon King, and all the nobles had bowed their heads.

The guard's expression towards us changed, and he opened the gate. He pulled Murata and me onto the estate.

"Ey, what a surprise! You're really a descendant of the Wincotts! Please excuse the impolite treatment earlier."

The soldier took a step backwards and followed us with his body half bowed. He indicated which way we should go with his right arm. The way he moved was reminiscent of a servant in a *ryokan*.

"Listen up, Murata: we're not visiting a consulate here, we're visiting a real prince! And no way does that guarantee he'll be able to help us get back home."

"I know that, of course. But hey, that guy thinks you are related to these people! That misunderstanding was just what we needed! Just see it through with this descendant thing. In the end, we're going to be regaled as super-noblemen here yet!"

Yeah, maybe. But it was also possible that exactly the opposite would happen.

CHAPTER 5

Chapter 5 by kannnichtfranz

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Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

Translated from the German edition by kannnichtfranz

Beta: Anonyskrit

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CHAPTER 5

Sir Norman Gilbit, Prince of Gilbit, the autonomous region of Carolia, feudal territory of Small Simaron, appeared on the scene with a middle age butler in tow. And just as promised, his whole head was hidden under a mask. The mask was not made of iron but rather some soft material tied on with leather bands in the back. It looked more like he'd been mummified.

"Pleased to meet you, sir."

I stood up to shake his hand. His thin, cold fingertips were so soft it ruled out a life containing any sort of physical labor. Because of his weird outer appearance, I felt like I was standing before an opponent in the ring. And a square table might be nothing unusual, but why did we have to sit right on the corners? And which was the red corner and which was the blue corner?

The butler took up a position behind his prince.

"You have surely already heard about the matter of the mask. My lord has spent his entire life since childhood in this guise. And if that weren't bad enough, ever since an unlucky accident three years ago, he hasn't been able to speak with a normal voice. For this reason, please forgive that my humble self will take the liberty to converse with you in this fashion."

"Oh, what a coincidence!"

Nonplussed, I turned to Murata.

"Actually, our Captain Crusoe here also injured his throat and eyes in a bathroom accident! Yes, it's true! Even cleaning the bathroom is dead dangerous these days. One should pay more attention to the warning label, 'Danger: do not mix'!"

What kind of nonsense was this all of a sudden?!

"At your age, already a captain!" marveled the butler.

"Indeed! He belongs to the super-elite, the best of his class. But in spite of his youth, his hair is in really bad shape. It only seems like he's overflowing with testosterone! So please excuse him if he doesn't take off his hat and his sunglasses."

Aha! Now I understood. He had solved one of our problems. Since I couldn't show my black hair and eyes, I shouldn't take off my cap and glasses. There was still another problem though: in order not to anger these people, I was going to have to come up with an awfully good excuse for why I'd pretended to be a descendant of the Wincotts. Or maybe we should play that game through to the end and let ourselves get accustomed to this treatment?

Namely: we'd been waited on by extremely charming young maids up to the point when the master of the house had taken the stage. They served us tea and cakes and gave us damp towels while wearing their short, cute dresses. Unfortunately Norman Gilbit's appearance had put an end to these pleasant

diversions.

We'd been told that a meal would be served soon. According to my loyal travel companion, the Digital/Analog G-Shock, it was already 9 o'clock. The fact that there was still going to be a meal served at this hour indicated that Norman was the type of guy who would see a night baseball game all the way through to the end. At least on that point, we seemed to be on the same wavelength.

Appetizers and aperitifs were carried in. As was to be expected, the liquid poured into our high-stemmed glasses was alcoholic. Thin slices of a star-shaped object were laid upon beautiful plates with gold designs.

Was it star fruit? Murata poked at his with his fork and murmured in shock.

"That's starfish!"

"What a delicacy," I whined.

After the exchange of pleasantries on the other side of the table had finished, the butler began to speak. He introduced himself as Baker. He looked like a bearded seal.

"Please forgive my indiscreet question, venerable Captain Crusoe, but what exactly is the relationship you have with the Wincott family?"

"The blessed late mother of our Captain here had Wincott blood in her veins."

I jabbed Murata in the side with my elbow. "My mother is not dead!" I protested quietly.

Robinson did not let himself be put off course by my objections and simply chatted on: "She died just before the Captain was born. He actually grew up in a foreign land, so he never met her personally. But one day he met someone who'd known his mother. And this man said that this object belonged to Shib--

to our Captain Crusoe."

Oh my god, had he gone totally nuts?! Died before I was born? How exactly was that supposed to have happened?! The bearded seal acted as if he hadn't even heard that slip of the tongue. But out loud he repeated the words that his master whispered to him.

"This woman of Wincott blood... what was her name?"

"Julia."

"Uaaaargh?!"

Under the table, I received a kick in the shin. I quickly clapped my hands over my mouth. That's right, according to the script, my voice box was broken.

"Ah, our good Captain. Even just hearing the name of his beloved mama causes his heart to break, and he makes strange noises."

The bearded seal indicated his acceptance of this with a nod of his head. I got the feeling there was a sympathetic expression in his eyes.

"But how do things stand with you? Can you fill us in on your relationship to the Wincott family?"

The prince's team held a long whispered conversation. Then the butler began to speak.

"I'm not sure if it would be the wish of the dead for me to tell you this, but very well... the ancestors of your esteemed late mother were the original ruling lineage of this region."

Excuse me?! I must have heard wrong. Lady Susanna Julia had been a demon, a member of the ten great noble houses of the Demon Empire. The Wincotts were

an especially historic and distinguished demon lineage!

"Now yes, it's true these events took place thousands of years ago. The Carolia of today had a different name then. At that time, the Wincotts ruled over the entire region and the people here. They fought against the old Creator Gods who wanted to devour our world. The Wincotts belonged to the wonderful folk who protected us from that fate. But then -- no one knows exactly why -- they became tyrants and suddenly swung the scepter of insanity over their subjects."

Creator Gods -- I'd heard that term before.

The bearded seal turned to his master Norman Gilbit and asked with a questioning look whether he should continue the story. The silver mask gave a small nod.

"The people rose up against their unjust tyrants. They longed for a new age and a fair ruler. The result of the battle was the establishment of the state of Carolia. As you surely already know, the Wincotts traveled the world after that, searching for a new home. In the end, they settled far away in the outermost west, and became demons."

What?! Then demons weren't actually just born as demons? Man can become demon, just by traveling around the world a bit?

"Due to this history, Carolia and the Wincotts are deeply tied to each other. The people of Carolia don't carry any grudges against the Wincotts today: the past is the past. After the unimaginably long time that has passed since then, we've buried all our antagonistic feelings."

"Do you really think anyone is going to believe that idiotic fairy tale?!" bellowed a voice that made me cringe for a moment. My goodness, what had gotten hold of Murata?!

But it wasn't Murata: new characters had appeared on the scene.

All faces spun towards the door in a flash. A troop of seven stood there; five were soldiers of the estate. They were escorting two men. The soldiers had their arms wrapped around the arms and hips of the two men.

I snapped my face away from the door with lightning speed and refocused on Norman Gilbit. Not that his looks were so attractive to me -- I just didn't want to have my face turned towards the new arrivals.

"The people revolted because the Wincotts had become tyrants?! Nonsense! As soon as they weren't needed any more, they were immediately disposed of. Even after they had protected the world from catastrophe. They were used shamelessly. When peace settled in, so did fear of our demonic powers. In the minds of humans, nothing changes. Everything different than they are should be eliminated. No matter how dirty the means are. Reconciliation? Don't make me laugh."

"Please forgive us, Sir Norman! We tried to stop them, but..."

It was an impressive sight, watching the soldiers dangle off the two men. The physical strength of these two men was phenomenal. They appeared to have simply dragged the soldiers along with them. As soon as my glance had fallen on one of the two, my traumas were activated: blond, blue eyes, attractive, wide torso, powerful hands, muscle-packed shoulders. Eagle nose, split chin, Denver Bronco. Traitor, arch-fiend, anti-demon. Weller, von Wincott, von Grantz.

Dalberto!

Well, naturally he wasn't called Dalberto, but I simply had no desire to remember his name!

In an effort to banish him from my consciousness, I tried to concentrate on the other guy. His haircut was pretty original. It was cut short on the sides and the rest was long, tied into a pony tail on the top of his head. His dark brown facial

hair was trimmed very precisely, so that the remaining stubs formed an artistic design on his high cheeks and his chin. There was a long stripe of a beard connecting his two sideburns. That type of thin beard was beginning to gain popularity with foreign baseball players and wrestlers.

The most dangerous weapon this man possessed appeared to be his knife-sharp intelligence. An imperturbability that bordered on apathy streamed from his narrow eyes. His emotions could not be read.

"Sir Maxine! At this late hour! What can I do for you?"

"Don't go to any trouble."

As the butler started to rise from his chair, Maxine indicated that he should remain seated with a hand gesture. Then Maxine stepped towards Norman Gilbit. He was standing right next to me. The Gilbit-team looked tense. I felt an icy breath come from Maxine. I had an urgent desire to hold fast to Murata's shirttails.

"So, Sir Norman Gilbit," said Maxine in a dry and dour voice. His method of speaking was intentionally restrained and slow -- as if he wanted to intimidate his opponent with it. "Worrisome stories are coming to light in Small Simaron."

"Sir Maxine, my master is dining with guests right now."

"I have not asked for the butler's opinion." Maxine pulled off a quick hand movement, and a glass broke on the floor. That was my aperitif.

"You must forgive me," he said to me. "When I get excited, I react quickly and somewhat impulsively."

Impulsively? Don't make me laugh! That had been his precisely calculated intention. I was so dumbfounded I didn't say anything.

"We are here so that Sir Norman Gilbit can personally take a position regarding these rumors. Though we naturally hope that our worries prove unfounded, given these circumstances we must ask you to come to the motherland and explain yourself. Sir Gilbit, is it a fact that you have espoused ideas that run counter to Simaron's plans? Have you formed ranks to circumvent the war with the demons? Does that equate to truth?"

Prince Gilbit whispered something to Baker. His chair creaked as he rose.

"Never have we even considered such a thing!"

"It is difficult to discern truth from lies when one cannot look a man in the face," said Maxine contemptuously.

Norman's shoulders flinched.

"You've lost your voice; that is well known to me. You have my deepest sympathies for your childhood illness. But in this room there are no ladies present who might faint at the sight of your pock-marked face or abscesses. Therefore please take off that silver mask so we can carry on a conversation man to man."

"Sir Maxine, you can't ask my master to do that!"

The butler was distraught, Gilbit was very tense. Somehow I had to find a way to break this oppressive atmosphere.

There was only one problem: if Adalbert von Grantz, the muscleman who rooted around in my brain that one time, caught wind of me, he'd finish me off in the blink of an eye. He hated the demon people and had already made one attempt on the freshly-crowned king's life.

"Or is there perhaps another reason why you don't dare remove that mask?"

A hasty glance showed me that Maxine didn't exhibit the slightest sign of agitation. His hand lay calmly to my right on the table top. His brown eyes were completely devoid of emotion. This man was dangerous.

"So, Sir Norman, why don't you let this cat out of the bag -- or perhaps I should say, out of the mask?"

I wasn't sure if Murata would understand what I meant, but I reached for his hand, to give him a sign that way. He snatched his hand away. My god, don't act like such a girl right now!

I couldn't allow Gilbit to be humiliated like this. When his thin, cold fingers touched the leather bands of his mask, I knew it was time for me to step in.

CHAPTER 6

Chapter 6 by kannnichtfranz

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Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

Translated from the German edition by kannnichtfranz

Beta: Anonyskrit

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CHAPTER 6

Until yesterday, he had still been Lord Gunter von Kleist. At least, that's what everyone had called him.

"And what's that supposed to mean?"

"I'm asking myself if a substance that's been stored for over a thousand years is still going to have exactly the same effects now as it did back then."

The *something* that had once been Lord Gunter von Kleist looked down from above on two people who seemed to him to be old friends. If he wasn't completely confused, one was Lord Gwendal von Voltaire, the unmistakable and unmitigated ice block, and the other was Lady Anissina von Kavernikov, also known as Anissina the Red.

"So another possibility might be that this poison was prepared with fresh ingredients from a recipe passed down over time. If that's the case then I can

only say: Bravo! Just finding the necessary ingredients would have been no child's play. The salt-monkey testicles are notably--"

"Stop!"

"Now what's your problem?"

From his high vantage point, Lord Gunter von Kleist could see very clearly that Gwendal was losing his composure. Even Gwendal, who normally presented only a cold and surly expression to the world, was capable of other emotions when he had the right opponent in front of him.

"Couldn't you show a little bit more modesty, just for today?"

"Modesty? I don't know of a single experiment where such a sentiment would have been of any use. I don't waste my time with such feelings. But speaking of modesty: Gunter's snow bunny is beginning to melt. I don't have a problem with it, but for you men it would surely be very embarrassing, isn't that true?"

The *something* that had once been Gunter smiled to itself and let its gaze wander around the room.

"Iiiiiieh!"

What a shocking sight! He had finally noticed the corpse in the middle of the room, lying in a coffin filled with ice. Between its legs perched a slowly dissolving snow rabbit which looked up at him with accusatory eyes.

"He's woken up," observed Anissina.

"Then I'm dead?! Like a poor little light blown out by a gust of wind?! Oh, but what an exquisite visage I still am, even in death... What a gorgeous figure! How wonderful it would be if His Majesty could see me like this!"

"Now he seems to have completely lost his mind. Love is a well-established cause of senility, or something like that. Gwendal, hand me that thing, please."

Lord von Voltaire's hands, calloused from swordfighting, reached for him and before he could prevent it, he was pulled downward from his high perch. Had his soul really been seized by bare hands? The *something* that had once been Gunter began to protest loudly.

"Gwendal! A newly deceased soul shouldn't be touched so recklessly! There's a chance it might not be able to be reborn again! Oh! You're probably just jealous of me, since I intend to be united with His Majesty in the next life! Your goal is to thwart my plans! Iiiiiieh! Please don't put me on this table, it's full of dust! Achoo! Achoo! Aaaaaachoo!"

"Is there no way to get him to shut his mouth?"

"I'm afraid the only thing that might stop his mouth is death." Anissina raised her well-formed eyebrows and rummaged around in a drawer, pulling out a piece of sticky tape. She pulled the paper backing off of a long, thin piece and stuck it in the face of the *something*.

"Listen carefully to what I have to tell you! No matter how much it disappoints you, you are still counted among the living. Your soul has simply been separated from your body, that's all. I have secured your astral body so that it can't escape."

"Oioioi..."

"For your astral body's safe-keeping, I located a suitable vessel, in which you now find yourself."

"Iiiiiieh!"

When he heard the word "vessel," he inevitably thought of a glass the size of a

flower vase, in which his brain floated in some kind of liquid. That was simply too disgusting. Oh, what terrible luck! His ice-gray hair, his violet eyes had been locked away -- all his beauty had been reduced to a peach-colored mass of brain cells.

"Don't worry, we haven't pickled your brain. After all, I wouldn't want to ruin my appetite," Anissina said, and Gwendal promptly grimaced.

Presumably he'd imagined a pickled schoolmaster. To clear up this terrible misunderstanding once and for all, Gwendal held a mirror in the face of the vessel that had once been Gunter.

"This is what you look like now."

In the brightly polished mirror, Gunter saw snow-white skin, scarlet red lips like a bud just before it blooms, and shining, back-length hair. The vessel was a foreign doll in a kimono.

It was the length of a forearm, and one-third of that length was the doll's head. The bangs ended above the eyebrows in a perfectly straight line. The hair, the curved eyebrows, and the smiling, crescent-shaped eyes were all an aristocratic and elegant black. Anissina brutally ripped the tape from the mouth of the doll.



"How do you like her? I've christened you with the name 'Madam Butterfly-Gunter, Bride of the Demon King.'"

"The bride of the Demon King, you say?" Gunter repeated the words with a throbbing heart.

"You said it, my dear Madam Butterfly-Gunter. And over there, the valiant Snow Gunter is resting. In spite of Lord von Bielefeld's eccentric tastes, even he gave Madam Butterfly-Gunter a giant round of applause. He said she fits perfectly with His Majesty."

"Really?"

The doll turned its head 180 degrees; her smiling eyes looked Gwendal directly in the face.

Gwendal's body flinched as if a cold shudder had run down his back.

"What a glorious masterpiece I've achieved!" proclaimed Anissina. "I constructed the doll so that she can perform various types of movements gracefully. Her jaw rattles prettily when she talks, and her hair will grow longer over time -- even when she is simply left to sit in a corner. She can even fire Killer Beams with her eyes! Better yet, this doll has mastered the art of levitation!"

"Does that mean I can fly?! How fantastic! I've got to give it a try right now!"

Gunter shoved himself upwards off the worktable and began to hover. Only a few centimeters over the surface of the table, he began to move as slowly as an infant. Meanwhile, he let out dreadful noises as if a giant fly was circling in the room. Indeed, levitation was a success, though airy heights were still out of reach.

"Isn't my invention wonderful? Just for today, she's priced at a laughable 98 gold pieces! And she comes with a magnificent box as a free gift!"

"How about two for the price of one?" hummed Gwendal.

"Men! Nothing is ever enough for you!"

In their own particular way, Gwendal and Anissina were one heart and one soul. As Gunter watched them amusing themselves at his expense, he felt displeasure take root within him.

Of course, in spite of all this, he should have considered himself lucky. When one fell victim to this poison, as a rule one couldn't expect so much as an honorable death. Even worse, it was customary to burn the corpse and scatter the ashes in the wind -- so horrific was this poison.

"An escort is being sent to all members of the Wincott family. Unfortunately we

don't know the whereabouts of all the people who have Wincott blood in their veins. Should a young Wincott leave the empire and reveal his identity frivolously, he runs the risk of being used," explained Anissina.

"W...what are you trying to say? Is one of the ten noble families taking aim at my life? Was the tip of the arrow that hit me coated with this... this appalling Wincott Poison?! The poison that turns you into the willing marionette of your enemy, even after your death? The poison that eats the flesh from your bones?"

"That's right, my dear. In light of your symptoms, there can be no doubt. The tip of the arrow was coated with precisely this poison."

The doll's jaw dropped open with a clack.

"But why would anyone want to make a marionette out of me? What a piece of luck that I could at least protect His Majesty from this fate! It doesn't bear thinking about, if something terrible had happened to him! Where is he, anyway? Where is His Majesty?!"

Madam Butterfly-Gunter would never have guessed that at that very moment, Yuri himself was posing as a descendant of the Wincotts.

Lord von Bielefeld paused silently before the mountain of mud. The motions of the soldiers, who had spent the entire night performing the search operation, had become sluggish from exhaustion.

They had not been able to recover the smallest object that could be matched to the missing persons, neither from the space behind the church nor the territory on the slope affected by the avalanche. There was still only the presumed left arm of Lord Weller that had been found at the beginning. They hadn't gotten a single step farther.

If they'd been carried away by the landslide, then why hadn't the bodies been found? Everything had been dug up. Even if the explosion had ripped them apart, the blue demon stone at least should have been there. Conrad's sword, a collar pin, a soldier's boot, something. Yet even though every stone had been turned over twice, nothing had been found. Thus the chances of survival for the two of them were continuously increasing.

"Hey!"

At Wolfram's call, the soldiers lifted their heads from the dirt.

"As soon as the reinforcements get here, you will be relieved from duty. Until then, take a rest."

"But Your Excellency, don't we need to work as fast as possible...?"

"No. The rain has stopped. The work can wait until mid-day. Morgan, has there been any news from the castle?"

"No, not since we learned that His Excellency Gunter had regained consciousness."

"All right. I'm heading back there anyway to try to ascertain the current state of affairs. As for the rest of the search, I'm relying entirely on you."

"Yes, sir. But Your Excellency...?"

"What is it?"

The soldier couldn't hide his concern from Wolfram, who had jumped up onto his horse smoothly.

"Please take an escort with you for your protection."

"You think I might be attacked?"

"The danger absolutely exists."

"All the more reason for me to ride alone. It's the fastest way to find out who the enemy is and where we need to strike."

The men cheered him on as Wolfram rode away. One wouldn't have thought the spoiled princeling was capable of such audacity.

Although more riders were going in and out than usual, an air of peace lay over Blood Pledge Castle.

The people could not be allowed to discover that an assassination attempt had been made on the king's life, and that his life was still feared for. The city lay right at the foot of the castle. Even the smallest sign of disturbance would be noticed by the civilians. One couldn't be careful enough.

After riding slowly through the city, Wolfram increased his pace. He passed the castle gate and turned his horse to the north, towards the foothills of the mountains. Spring was on its way, and a delicate green began to line the path. When they reached the mountainside, the animal was exhausted, and further progress could only be made on foot. Silently, Lord Wolfram von Bielefeld tackled the incline.

Fire burned day and night in the Ancestral Temple of the Original King. Without permission from the priestesses, entrance was forbidden to men. A burly female soldier guarded the entryway.

"Lord Wolfram von Bielefeld? What is the reason for your visit?"

"I have a question for the priestesses. I'm coming in now."

"Please wait, Your Excellency! Even though you are a man of high rank, you can't enter without an invitation from the Original King or his priestesses."

"This is an emergency! Out of the way!"

"But Your Excellency!"

Shaking off the guard, Wolfram forced his way into the building. His quick steps echoed to the tall ceiling. His swirling hair was mirrored in the highly polished black floor. He had visited this place a few times before, following the laws of etiquette, but this was the first time he'd done so on his own initiative. In the wide hallway, he passed young women keeping a close eye on the intruder. They whispered things to each other with their mouths hidden behind their sleeves. Most of them were still in training to become priestesses and were still wet behind the ears. They still wore their hair at the customary hip length.

"Your Excellency Wolfram," a voice suddenly called. When he turned around, a young woman with a bowl of fruit was coming towards him. It was Lord von Kleist's daughter, a talented military doctor. She looked different than usual: her hair was up and she wasn't wearing a military uniform. Her green eyes darkened with concern as she gently reprimanded the colleague she'd known since childhood.

"What's happened? Men aren't allowed to enter the temple without permission and an escort."

"Gisela, I'm in a hurry. What are you doing here, anyway? You're obviously not on duty."

"That's true. After my father's life was saved, I wanted to pray for the safety of His Majesty and Conrad... I mean, His Excellency Conrad."

Even though Wolfram now found himself in the company of a woman, he would

never dream of slowing his pace. This inconsiderate behavior was one of the reasons he wasn't particularly sought after by the opposite sex. Gisela, on the other hand, didn't place great importance on the special treatment of women, and so they hurried forwards together at a soldier's tempo.

The deeper into the Ancestral Temple they pressed, the higher the rank of the priestesses they came across. They became aware of younger girls at the side of the hallways and behind the doorways, hanging their heads. The collective sadness seemed strange.

"It seems to have hit them very hard that the priestesses lost track of His Majesty," said Gisela.

Just before the entrance to the inner sanctum, a female soldier barred his way again. Behind this door lived Ulrike, the highest and oldest of the priestesses; the receiver and herald of the venerable word of the Original King.

"The Oracle Priestess Ulrike receives no one."

"This is an emergency!" Wolfram barked at her, but she didn't so much as bat an eyelash. Although she didn't appear to be particularly athletically built, she made no move to retreat even one step back from Wolfram.

"Holing yourself up in there just because you botched Yuri's return trip is pointless!" Wolfram roared. "Open the door immediately!"

"Your Excellency! You could be a little more considerate," Gisela commented.

"Do you want money? A financial sacrifice? Is that it? If so, name your price! I've had enough!"

"Your Excellency! That's a shameful sacrilege against our priestess! Venerable Ulrike! Please answer as quickly as possible! This person might dare to break down the door!"

Wolfram's pent-up feelings discharged in a powerful explosion. His threats had such an intimidating effect that even the guard looked down at the floor.

"I'm going to break down this door here and now! I make no promises! If you drive me to it, I'll even use magic right here in the Ancestral Temple!"

Wolfram was out of breath; Gisela pushed him to the side and called out in a friendly voice, "Venerable Ulrike! Please open the door and tell us the whole story. Otherwise, this maniac will give you no peace. Venerable Oracle Priestess, you can trust me. I will personally vouch for your safety. I won't allow him to harm even a single hair on your head."

The stone double doors opened a fraction and through the gap, silver hair was visible. It was Ulrike.

"Really?" she asked tentatively.

"Yes, of course." Gisela bowed slowly to the highest priestess. "After all, it's the first time that you, venerable Ulrike, have made a mistake while performing a return trip, isn't that right?"

"I didn't make a mistake!"

"Oh no, of course not. You certainly did everything right. You were just interrupted by a disruptive force," soothed Gisela.

"That's it! We were disturbed. We did our best to lead His Majesty back to the other world, but we were attacked by an evil power."

The priestess went back into her chamber and sank weakly into a chair. Wolfram and Gisela followed her. Seeing Ulrike hit rock bottom wasn't an everyday occurrence.

"This time, we weren't the ones who called His Majesty here," said the priestess.

"I heard that too," muttered Wolfram.

"Nevertheless, it so happened that His Majesty's soul was brought into our world through the power of an unknown entity. As if that weren't enough, we weren't even able to send him back unharmed. And now we have lost track of him entirely. Never have I suffered such dishonor. Not since my birth 800 years ago."

"For an 800 year old, your skin looks quite youthful," observed Wolfram.

"Tell us, venerable Ulrike, how did the priestesses know that His Majesty was on his way to us?"

For a brief moment, an arrogant smile crept over the lips of the girl, but her gaze sank immediately back down again. "With the power that the mighty Original King has loaned to us, we are capable of determining the location of the souls of all the Demon Kings. This sight is not intended for the eyes of average mortals, but, very well, I will show it to you."

Wolfram was not exactly pleased to be referred to as an "average mortal," but he had no desire to start an argument over it at this time.

With small steps, Ulrike approached a wall and threw back the ceiling-high curtain with a deft movement. A milky sphere hovered over a black pedestal made out of slick obsidian. Like the inner skin of an egg, it was cloudy and unclear. One could have lifted it with two hands, but touching it seemed out of the question. It looked so delicate that it might dissolve into thin air any moment.

"Do you see the golden star there?" asked the priestess.

Like a map of the heavens, a number of stars twinkled inside the sphere. Four of them stood comparatively close together; the rest were farther spread out. The

priestess gestured to a golden star that was positioned somewhat apart from the others, and shone more brightly than the rest.

"That is the soul of your mother, the previous Demon Queen Lady Cecille von Spitzweg."

In truth, it made a decidedly feisty impression.

"Her star probably shines so brightly because she still possesses her powers as Demon Queen," Gisela said.

"I find it hard to believe that's the only reason," Wolfram disagreed.

Next, Ulrike pointed to the weakest of the four bright points that were close together. "And this erratically flickering light is the king before last. You can see clearly that his once great power is fading. This area here represents the Radford region. In the near future, His Majesty Bertrand will lose his immense powers as Demon King completely and lead a quiet life in retirement."

"You can even pinpoint their whereabouts?!" Gisela exclaimed.

"Inside the Empire's borders, yes. On human territory, not even I can determine their location, unfortunately. Take, for example, this golden light of Madam Cheri. Although I can tell that she is without a doubt in good health, I don't know where she is at this time. It must be somewhere very far away from our Empire. That lady is full of energy and always traveling. Oh!"

For a fleeting moment, another star flashed right next to the golden one, but it disappeared as quickly as it had come. It had a strong blue-white luster, and its shape was more oblong than the others.

"What was that?" asked Wolfram.

"I don't know. Its radiance was abnormally strong, but unstable. It must come

from quite a fearful being. There was an irregularity there that--"

"That was Yuri!"

Wolfram remembered Yuri's magic and how he had felt about it at the work camp of Svererra. His magic had been appalling and hideous. Apart from that, it had vacillated with extreme irregularity.

"It's true that an unstable flicker is always present in His Majesty's star. But that was definitely a large anomaly," the priestess gave voice to her doubts. "Oh, look! There is it again!"

"That's definitely Yuri! Oh thank god, he's alive!"

Wolfram pressed the flat of his hand to his forehead to stave off the stabbing pain spreading through his sinuses. He swallowed down his rising tears.

"But where is he? Can you tell me what location he's in right now?" he asked the priestess.

"If what you say is really true, then His Majesty is in our world again. But not on demon territory. Unfortunately I cannot determine his current location."

"You're 800 years old and you can't even tell that?!"

Ulrike bit her lip sharply. That move might come back to bite him...

"I don't have to take that from an 80 year old!" She swallowed.

Gisela sensed that Ulrike could break out in tears at any moment. "Your Excellency, I beg of you. What do you intend to accomplish with this rude behavior? You can't act like that towards a young girl."

"Young? She's 800 years old!" The young, pretty 82 year old man looked

ashamed.

"Girls are still girls," Gisela said severely. "Age plays no role in it! Am I not right, venerable Ulrike? Really, it's always the same with you men."

She sounded a lot like Anissina.

Wolfram was forced to watch how the highest priestess, amid tears, managed a weak nod, whereupon his shoulders fell. What a defeat, when he was the one who was the spoiled princeling!

Was it perhaps possible that the Oracle Priestess Ulrike was in reality the exact opposite of what she appeared to be at first glance? Was she not a girl with the heart of an aged, senior priestess, but rather an old woman who still possessed the body and heart of a young girl? Wolfram was seized by a cold shiver at the thought.

"Good grief, fine, whatever," he sighed. "At least we know Yuri's alive now. I'll find out where he's got to myself. Oh, it lit up again!"

Right next to Cheri, an oblong star had appeared again. It looked like a comet dragging a tail along behind it. Compared to the golden light of Madam Cheri, it really did seem very erratic -- again and again it turned itself on and off.

"My mother's magic seems to be much more stable. Wait a minute, if both of those stars are so close together, could that mean..."

"No, by no means does that indicate that the two of them are together," the priestess interrupted in a whiny voice. "It may look that way to our eyes, but there might be whole cities between them in reality." Against her will, Ulrike admitted her defeat, but their quarrel had already become irrelevant to Wolfram.

"As long as they're only one or two cities apart from each other, it's no problem.

It'll be enough if we can isolate an approximate location. If we can believe these constellations of stars, Yuri must be very near to the previous queen. Possibly in the same country, but definitely on the same continent. Now we just need to know my mother's location."

The distinction between men and demons played no role in determining the destinations of Madam Cheri's Voyages of Free Love. The man she'd taken into the circle of her favorites for the last six months was a very well-to-do gentleman from a powerful empire. Aside from that, he was many times younger than she was.

"Simaron!" Wolfram remembered. "She let him give her castles and ships that were all registered in Simaron."

"Then the probability is high that His Majesty is also to be found there," said Gisela bleakly. Why did it have to be Simaron of all places? Of all the lands of men with hostile feelings towards the demon race, Simaron was the most powerful. Small Simaron and Big Simaron together formed the motherland, but their power was not limited to these regions. In the last decades, Simaron had brought nearly all the nations on the continent under its power. By now, Simaron ruled fully one quarter of the world. And according to the most recent information, Simaron had also taken possession of a forbidden "box." With the aid of this weapon, their combat strength might grow to be immeasurable. If Simaron did, in fact, employ this weapon, the future of the entire world was uncertain.

"At least we have a point of reference now," Lord Wolfram von Bielefeld said, turning on his heel and loudly stomping back the way he had come. Gisela hurried after him.

"What are you planning to do?" she asked.

"I will report back to Lord von Voltaire."

"And then?"

"I will wait for further orders."

"Orders?"

"Of course. Since Yuri isn't here, the command lies solely with my brother. And your adoptive father is, unfortunately, not fit for duty at this time, either."

"I know, he's a doll."

To distract Wolfram's thoughts, she described the beams that Gunter could shoot out of his eyes and his flying skills, but Wolfram didn't seem in the mood to laugh at the moment.

"I'm wondering about Yuri's star."

"Its shape was somewhat protracted."

"Yes. The difference to the others was simply too great. And the magnitude of its radiance was much greater."

"Maybe he's not alone? Maybe Conrad is by his side? I heard that his body was never found. Maybe they're together after all, even if he did lose an arm. After all, His Excellency would do anything to protect our king."

"If that were the case, I wouldn't be concerned at all. At least, not this kind of concern. But it's pretty improbable that Lord Weller affected his radiance, since he has no magic at his disposal. That's also why his location can't be determined like that of Yuri and my mother."

"That's true, of course. But what can have become of Conrad?" Gisela murmured -- it sounded much like a sigh.

It suddenly dawned on Wolfram: Gisela's heart belonged to Conrad! Conrad had always been a heart-throb to women. It was no surprise that one woman or another would be hopelessly in love with him. Concern for him had driven Gisela to visit the Ancestral Temple of the Original King and to offer up a sacrifice for him.

In speculation on matters of love, the beautiful young man's fantasies proved none too imaginative.

CHAPTER 7

Chapter 7 by kannnichtfranz

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(Sorry! This one accidentally ended up friends-locked yesterday!)

Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

Translated from the German edition by kannnichtfranz

Beta: Anonyskrit

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CHAPTER 7

I pressed my hands to my stomach and began to moan.

Maxine considered me only fleetingly with an uninterested glance. He didn't feel the need to feign an ounce of sympathy when the person right next to him had doubled over in pain. The man's heart was apparently made of stone. But I secretly admired his cool methods just a little bit.

"So, Sir Norman Gilbit, there are only men present here. Take off the mask."

"Sir Maxine, are you only interested in my master's face, or would you perhaps rather hear what Carolia's people think about their motherland? Wouldn't you like to know our opinion on these warmongering plans?"

"Whatever it is I want to know, one thing is for sure!" Maxine's voice grew

louder. "I did not ask the butler!"

His left hand struck out so quickly I didn't even see it. The bearded butler sailed a few meters through the air, crashed against the wall, and remained lying there, motionless. A maid ran to the gasping victim and lifted his head onto her lap.

"He's got it good," I sighed. Damn, why did I always have to have such dirty thoughts?

Even with the loss of the butler who was his only ally, Sir Norman seemed unfazed.

"Perhaps I have made myself clear enough now, my esteemed Gilbit?" Maxine said frostily. With each subsequent word, the level of anger in his voice increased. "Simaron suspects you of treason! In your place, I would throw this mask and your idiotic pride overboard immediately, and start confessing the truth!"

Maxine took up the position where the butler had been standing, grabbed Norman by the chin, and wrenched him from his chair. This could no longer be classified as a meeting between the representative of a colonial power and the prince of an autonomous region.

"Your country is under the control of Small Simaron. What have you done behind our backs? Have you dared to make direct contact with Big Simaron's royal family? Answer me now!"

Maxine loosened the hand on Norman Gilbit's chin and gripped the mask instead. The delicate, peaceful Gilbit didn't have a chance against the representative from Small Simaron. And since I was too inconsequential to step between them and be taken seriously, I could only murmur, "Quit it, stop." But Maxine wasn't remotely interested in doing that.

He began to loosen the leather bands at the back of the mask. Norman tried to

hold them together with his thin fingers, but Maxine responded by pressing down on his head. Resistance seemed futile. Next Maxine went for a stranglehold. Norman stuck his arm out. His thin white fingertips reached in my direction. I rose from my chair and touched my fingertips briefly to his. What a brave young man, not allowing himself to be defeated by illness and accidents, and still giving his all as prince. Mutely, since he couldn't speak, he withstood the torturous treatment from his opponent.

Keeping my face turned forwards, I came around the table. Just by my voice alone, Adalbert wouldn't be able to recognize me. How would he be able to tell that I'm the Demon King if I keep my hair and eyes hidden?

"Hey, you there, Mr. Maxine! It's true I've kept my mouth shut until now, but don't you think your methods are a little brutal? Mr. Gilbit was sick and was in an accident. How can you demand that he take his mask off?!"

His eyes, cold as glass, took me in his sights. "I don't know you. But I advise you to stay out of this matter. This man is a traitor to his colonial power, Small Simaron. He gave us the runaround in order to cut a deal with Big Simaron. If this betrayal proves to be true, we will be forced to withdraw Carolia's autonomy and all her other privileges."

His dry voice sounded like the growling of a predatory animal.

"But a confession doesn't count if it's forced. First just listen to what he wants to tell you voluntarily. And stop choking him, or he's going to suffocate."

Without taking his eyes off me, Maxine loosened his hold on Norman Gilbit's neck.

"Sir, who are you and where have you come from that you dare to criticize Small Simaron's methods? You don't seem to be from around here."

"I... I'm Captain Crusoe. My native country is very far away from here."

Suddenly a high, fine voice rung out, and everyone in the room stopped to listen. It was so pretty that you wanted to put your hands over your ears to hold on to it.

"So you really want to see my face that much?"

"Sir Norman, please don't do it!" the butler pleaded from his lap-pillow. "You can't reveal your face! Think about the consequences! What will happen to your people and this country?! If you take your mask off now, there won't be any future for our people!"

"Baker, I simply can't do this any more."

With his delicate fingers, Norman Gilbit, the masked prince, began to loosen the leather bands at his neck. He was about to remove his mask voluntarily.

"Sir Gilbit! No!" the butler and maid yelled in chorus. Both of them were about to break out in tears.

"It looks like my time has come. I don't believe I'll be able to protect my secret any longer."

He pulled his head out of the silver mask. The platinum blond hair that had been tucked inside rolled down his back in waves. His cheeks and chin were a translucent white, which probably stemmed from the fact that they'd seen no sun in years. His sparkling bright green eyes seemed to be sensitive to the light. There were red welts under his eyes and along his ears which were probably caused by wearing the mask such a long time. Yet these small injuries couldn't impact the overwhelming beauty of this woman. She smiled a tortured smile.

What?! A woman?! It wasn't a masked prince after all, but rather a masked princess?!

"What is the meaning of this?"

As I heard Maxine's tight voice, I was seized by a shudder and came back to my senses. This woman's beauty had taken my breath away for a full twenty seconds.

Drunkenly swaying, the butler came back and gripped the woman's fist, which still held the mask, with both hands.

"My lady..." the butler said.

"Who the hell are you?! Where is the real Sir Gilbit?!" roared Maxine. The whites of his eyes were bloodshot; his light brown eyes burned with anger. He smashed one plate after another on the floor. "I came here to speak with Norman Gilbit! At the command of His Majesty Saralegi, the King of Small Simaron, I'm here to take him to task! And then suddenly it turns out that some random shrew has come along and slipped into his role!"

The butler grabbed Maxine fearlessly by the lapels and shook him. "You dare to call my mistress a random shrew?! All those years my lady stood faithfully by her husband's side when he was still well!"

"Let it go, my dear Baker. Sir Maxine's anger is more than justified. We have no alternative but to end all the secrecy and plead for forgiveness from our motherland Simaron."

Murata, Maxine and I stared at the woman.

I was probably the only one frivolously speculating about her age and body size. She was probably a few years older than me. From her looks, she had to be about twenty.

"I, Flynn Gilbit, married my husband Norman Gilbit six years ago in the spring. Because of my husband's childhood illness, he lived his life under this mask. That

never bothered me; Norman had a good heart. As a prince and also as a man, he was respected by all. But three years ago he met his death in the carriage accident."

"What exactly are you trying to say? That for three years, this region has not been ruled by the prince, but by his wife? Am I understanding this correctly?"

Flynn Gilbit couldn't hold it together any longer; she began to cry. The tears of a beautiful woman didn't seem like normal tears, in my opinion. I imagined they were filled with a lot of love or loneliness.

"We didn't have much time for mourning," she said when she found her voice again. "We had to face a terrible fact: Norman and I still didn't have any children. There was no descendant." She sniffed noisily and continued, "And Simaron's laws prohibit feminine succession. Without a successor, the feudal territory would be returned to the state, and so the whole region would be absorbed into Simaron. We had to prevent that. And this is the result."

Flynn wrapped her thin white fingers around the mask and twisted it until the material squeaked.

"Luckily, my husband left me his mask. Since his childhood, no one had seen his face. We thought it would work out if I kept my voice a secret. So I decided to live my life as Norman Gilbit."

"How can people be so naive?" we all groaned.

This amateur trick had fooled the entire world for three years.

"It wasn't exactly easy." Flynn sighed deeply. "It would grow musty under the mask and it would stink of sweat. And in the summer you also get a heat rash!"

"Laws have been shamelessly broken here, and you have nothing better to do than complain about heat rash? Who the hell cares if you have a fart sitting

across from you?"

Well, she hadn't actually said anything about sitting across from a fart...

"Oh my lady, what a pitiable fate you've been forced to suffer! I would never have been able to bear that sweat-soaked mask," the butler lamented.

"How did you get through all the meals?" I wanted to know.

"Did it never occur to anyone to simply wash the thing?" Adalbert groaned.

Flynn Gilbit's story dragged on for an eternity. We had to suffer through six whole years of her life. But people can demonstrate remarkable staying power when a beautiful woman is making a passionate confession.

"The parliament will deal with Norman Gilbit's death," the representative from Small Simaron eventually said. "But back to my original concern: Norman... no, Flynn Gilbit, is it true that you have spoken out against Small Simaron's war plans and independently launched an anti-war movement?"

"Absolutely not," was her answer.

I was a little disappointed. Damn it, was there not a single, solitary pacifist around here?

Maxine wasn't convinced. "Then how do you explain the rumors about Gilbit?"

"Which rumors?"

Maxine helped himself to my chair, sat down, crossed his long legs and said, "I'm talking about the Wincott Poison."

And so once again here in this foreign country, Julia's family name became the topic of conversation. When Adalbert -- supposedly her ex-boyfriend -- heard this name, his eyebrows twitched slightly.

"We heard that someone wanted to turn certain people into unwilling marionettes with the aid of this Wincott Poison."

"Well, would you listen to that! And who might that be, if I may ask?"

Despite the heavy accusations, Flynn responded with cold-blooded composure. Her delicate voice was long gone. Now she spoke like a true ruler.

"That is precisely what we wanted to learn from you. The Wincott clan moved to the west long ago and settled in the Demon Empire. But we suspect the original poison is still to be found within these walls. Has it ever left this estate? Was it perhaps even sold?" Maxine demanded.

Flynn tilted her head slightly to the side. The corners of her mouth formed a smile. Her beauty attracted all gazes straight to her.

"But of course the Wincott Poison is stored in our cellars. And for the right price, we are always prepared to hand it over to a third party. Naturally, that includes you, Sir Nigel Weiz Maxine."

Maxine's lips contorted savagely amid his extravagant facial hair. Apparently, being addressed with his full name by Flynn Gilbit really rubbed him the wrong way. "Then why don't you tell us who the last purchaser was?" he said.

Meanwhile, Butler Baker sat in his chair again, and the maid who had taken such good care of him served tea.

"I'm sorry. I'm not able to give you the answer to that question," Flynn said.

Without her mask, she gave the impression of being extremely determined.

Every sign of insecurity had vanished. She even took on a threatening attitude. In the three years of ruling under the mask, her face had surely looked exactly like it did in this moment.

"You can't escape me that way, my dear. It is the duty of a vassal state to answer to the colonial power."

"And that is precisely the reason why I must withhold the answer from you."

I had kind of lost track of the conversation. But Murata had both ears pricked -- probably waiting hopefully to hear the name of some place he recognized. When was he ever going to comprehend that we weren't on Earth any more?

Nigel Weiz Maxine called the maid over. She wore a bright blue apron, held a full teapot in her hand, and sported a friendly smile as she went to pour the hot tea into his cup.

Suddenly Maxine swung the girl around, and wrenched her onto his lap. Something silver flashed. In the next moment, she was kneeling on the ground and clutching at her neck with both hands. The teapot fell from her hand and broke on the ground. Hot red liquid sprayed out of it.

"What are you doing?!" I cried.

"Let the girl go immediately."

Flynn's harsh order pre-empted my impulse to go to the girl's aid. A strand of what looked like piano wire was wrapped around the girl's neck. Maxine's hands held both ends taut.

Adalbert, who had been silent up to this point, said in a stunned voice, "So he still hasn't overcome his tasteless bad habits."

The girl scratched at her throat like a madwoman in attempt to get her fingernails under the wire. It was probably digging deeper and deeper into her

skin. Her head fell further and further into the nape of her neck. It didn't seem like she had a chance.

"Did you not understand me?!" roared Flynn. "You will let the girl go!"

"No, you seem not to have understood me. To whom did you give the poison?"

Had this guy been bitten by wild apes or something? And Flynn wasn't much better. Give him his goddamn answer, already! The life of a girl as delightful as this was clearly more important than this absurd altercation!

While the two combatants threatened each other with their blank glares, the maid gave a quiet cough. Pink liquid mixed with froth ran down from her mouth in a line.

"Damn it, that's blood!" I stumbled forward, stretching out my hand imploringly.
"Let the girl go! She's dying! Let go, I'm telling you!"

As my fingers touched her blue apron, a small electrical shock jerked through my body. "What...? That's enough, just stop it already!" I tried to grip the wire and break it, but I couldn't get it. The girl's clouded eyes pleaded with me. "Stop it already!" I cried and punched Maxine in the chin, the girl jammed between us.

"This is solely Flynn's decision," Maxine replied in a monotone, his countenance ice-cold.

I turned to the master of the house, but she didn't look like she was going to so much as make a peep. As I briefly lifted my head, my gaze met Adalbert's. He was leaning against the wall with his arms crossed. He seemed about to say something. His eyes bored into me. His lips formed the words, "It's you." But at that moment I couldn't have cared less if my cover was blown.

"Help her! Help the girl!" I pleaded with him.

"Don't hurt her!" Murata also yelled now, attempting a sleeper hold on Maxine. With just a quick turn of his head and shoulders, Maxine was able to fling him off.

"Murata?!"

In slow motion I saw my friend roll over the ground. He ran the back of his hand over the corner of his mouth, pulling away a stripe of blood. He heaved up his head and one of his contact lenses flew through the air. His now black eye squinted a little. In the middle of that blackness, at a single point as if stabbed by a needle, I noticed a fluctuation that disturbed me.

I couldn't look there, no way. As soon as I looked at that point, I would become...

In the next moment, the world around me turned snow white.

It felt as though someone had left me all alone in a landscape of dry ice. There was no woman's voice like I'd always heard before. When I reached my hand out, I touched only white smoke. I could go as far as I liked, but I accomplished nothing.

Feeling around, I moved through the white gloom.

In the distance, heated and energetic words pressed against my ears, as if someone were banging the mallets of a Japanese drum against each other. My face relaxed a little. Even if I couldn't understand what he was saying, I'd really like to have a little of his energy.

"You are beasts that take the form of men. Wolves should quarrel with wolves and foxes with foxes. Driven by greed you seek out human settlements, you shameless fools! This clever girl carries out her duties with a smile. And you dare to harm even a hair on the head of this enchanting creature?!"

Those who were witnessing this display for the first time were speechless with terror.

"With deadly poison, you play your game. And only for the question of its whereabouts was this brave person harmed. Doing nothing to stop this evil -- that is appalling. Should it be that such creatures come away unpunished? No, it should not."

He pointed at the shocked duo of Flynn and Maxine in turn. He stepped forward on his toes and turned his side towards them. This supermodel pose had become second nature to him.

"You are barbarians! Though it is repugnant to me to misuse such a valuable drink that should instead delight the palate, this evil must be detoxified. My wish was not to take lives, yet you leave me no choice. My sword will strike you down!"

Although there was always some drivel about a sword from this guy, he had never made use of one.

The broken teapot's spilled contents, along with the remnants of tea in the teacups that had dropped to the floor, all flowed together into a large puddle.

"W... what is that?!"

Out of reflex, Flynn lifted her feet off the floor. Still sitting on her chair, she wrapped her arms around her knees like a child.

Maxine, the other target of this punishment, assessed the situation in a more relaxed manner. What he was seeing for the first time in his life was the so-called "magic." The sight of it might be nauseating, but there were also some exorcists who let themselves be carried away into tasteless acts.

Adalbert had torn the heaving maid out of Maxine's grip. His attention was focused much less on the pool of tea slowly taking on humanoid form, and much more on the faintly glowing blue demon stone on Yuri's chest. But that stone belongs to the Wincott family, he thought. Susanna Julia had always worn it, ever since birth. What was it doing hanging around the neck of this lout? Who the hell had given him Julia's demon stone?!

The red liquid, which had by now formed a veritable lake, stilled for a moment, resembling the surface of a calm sea. Everyone breathed out. But even before they could breathe in again, the liquid drew itself up into a human shape that nearly grazed the ceiling. With the four fingers of its hand, it formed a pistol and pointed it directly at Flynn and Maxine.



"W... what? An angry tea-god?!" exclaimed Murata, the only one standing behind Yuri. He was undecided as to whether it was something to fear or

something to laugh at.

Again and again, the tea god fired red shots out of its fingertips at its targets. Fear was written across the faces of those being fired upon. To a casual observer, the whole thing might have looked like a fun game. Perhaps the Demon King was holding himself back, since there were few true villains in this arena.

"The judgement will be enforced in a small scope!"

Red liquid sprayed forth; both targets were soaked. For Maxine, every drop became a blade, and they saturated his arms and cheeks with cuts. The drops bombarding Flynn were about the dimensions of raindrops. She wouldn't even get bruises from them. Thus, the Demon King remained ever the gentleman, even in undeserved cases.

Adalbert snatched up a receipt that had fallen from the apron of a servant who had fainted.

Why was it that Yuri was able to use magic on human territory? There really shouldn't have been any elements in this small town that would obey the demons.

Soap, de-wormer, black tea (from Kakil), he read. Aha! Kakil lay on the border of the Demon Empire. That's why this black tea obeyed the orders of a demon.

Meanwhile, Shogun Yuri seemed to be missing something. He looked all around searchingly. "Oh well, it doesn't matter." He gave a resigned sigh, apparently not finding what he'd been looking for.

But it was there! In the middle of the snow white tablecloth, a tea stain had formed the character for "justice."

CHAPTER 8

Chapter 8 by kannnichtfranz

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Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

Translated from the German edition by kannnichtfranz

Beta: Anonyskrit

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CHAPTER 8

The whole time, I heard the song *Bésame Mucho* playing in my head, with muted alto saxophones capably setting the mood.

"Ouch, my ears, I feel sick..." I groaned.

"You probably got tea in your ears."

My location felt secure. Even before I opened my eyes, I could tell that my head was resting on someone's lap. But Wolfram wasn't here and Murata, who was much bonier, would have felt much harder. Where did this indescribable elasticity come from all of a sudden? Surely it couldn't be the maid?!

"Argghh!"

I rolled away like a log on a steep decline. I needed to get as much distance as I could between myself and my would-be pillow as fast as possible.

"W... why was I lying on Adalbert's lap?!"

"To hell with this unthankful lordling. I try to be nice for once, and this is what I get."

Adalbert stretched his legs and stood up. That well-cushioned pillow was, in fact, a little too warm for my taste after all.

I needed to find out what had happened. What type of natural disaster had I let loose this time? While my better self was enjoying the music, my dark alter ego possibly stamped out an entire city. These different selves both belonged to me in the end. I couldn't close my eyes to that fact.

I could actually remember a little about what happened. After I got past that snow-white darkness, I saw how the other me got on his soapbox shogun style. And after that, there was no stopping him.

But why hadn't I heard the woman's voice? She had always stood by me before. Was my trial period over, as it were? Was I now a full-fledged member of the firm? Did something like a trial period really exist for Demon Kings?

The room looked as if a bomb had exploded in it. But at least the maid was free. She was crying loudly against the chest of the bearded Butler Baker.

Murata came towards me at a leisurely pace and held the tablecloth under my nose. Emblazoned right in the middle was a large brown stain with the word "justice."

"Here it is, your completed masterpiece."

"Murata..."

How was I supposed to talk my way out of this one? Or was this maybe the

perfect opportunity to take the bull by the horns and lay it all out in plain English?

"Er, Murata?"

"Man, that magic act of yours is totally ready for the stage! It was so exciting, I was scared shitless. A question, Shibuya -- where did you learn that? I always thought you were a convincing catcher and baseball was all you cared about. So in reality, did you always want to be a magician, or what?"

"What? Errrrrrr, well, that with the magic is... just a hobby. Nothing but a hobby."

"Nonsense! With that show, you'd easily put professional magicians to shame! Which is not really something that can be said about you and baseball."

This guy was really in a league of his own. Although he was living through one completely absurd scene after the next, he explained it all away with magic tricks or the foreign culture of other countries.

"Truly, that was totally cool, man," he gushed. "The great illusionist who can rescue the girl with a magic trick! Thanks to your lack of chest hair, I like you even better than David Copperfield."

Total chaos reigned in Flynn Gilbit's dining room. Walls, ceilings, and even the window frames were completely drenched. The room was filled with the aroma of tea.

But what was with those tattered rags that were crawling across the floor? It was a thoroughly cut up Nigel Weiz Maxine. Propping himself against a wall, he was finally successful in pulling himself upright. With a blood-smeared face, he looked down at me.

"Don't come too close!"

Maxine pressed the back of his head against the wall. With his eyes closed, he tilted his head back. "I don't have any serious wounds. It's quite impressive that you were able to inflict these precise cuts on me. But who the devil are you? You seem to be a colleague of Adalbert's."

"A glance at his hair and eyes should be enough to answer that question," Adalbert grumbled.

Only now did I notice that my cap had been torn from my head. It was lying in a corner. Murata picked it up and tugged it down over my skull.

"So his hair and his eyes are black," murmured Maxine. After reaching his conclusion, he looked meaningfully in another direction. He'd probably had it up to his eyeballs with me already.

Adalbert raised his hand as if to clap a good friend on the back.

Mutely I turned away, seeking open spaces, but I was held fast by the shoulder.

The man who once wanted to put the brand new Demon King on ice was highly amused by my rash behavior -- just like back then, when we met for the first time.

"Captain Crusoe, if I'm not mistaken? I've got a couple questions for you."

"I don't want anything to do with you," I said. "Gunter and Conrad advised me not to get involved with you!"

"Gunter and Conrad, aha. Where have those two got to? What is an inexperienced guy like you doing hanging around an area so far removed from the Empire, with an even more inexperienced comrade in tow?"

Since the conversation had come around to him, Murata answered in a genial, conversational tone: "Oh, pleased to make your acquaintance -- I'm Robinson. I was in the same class as Crusoe in the second and third year of middle school."

"Are you also a demon?"

"Excuse me? A demon? Well, yes, I do have a modem at home."

It's a good thing his hair was bleached. It was just about impossible to tell that his hair had been black originally.

I finally brought myself to ask Adalbert a question: "Why are you in cahoots with this homicidal maniac?"

"Homicidal? Him? Nah, he's just got a few bad habits."

Murata had been watching us for a while with a smile. Now he clapped us both on the shoulder. "Well, look at that! In spite of the age difference, you two get along with each other just great! That's a really nice story. Two people from different nations celebrating a grand reunion in a foreign country. What karma! Maybe you were teammates in previous lives. It could be, right?"

"Mu... Murata... please..." I stuttered.

I found it hard to believe there could ever be a team, in this life or any other, that would have room for the both of us.

Suddenly, Adalbert grabbed me by the neck and stuffed his hand down my collar. He was after the demon stone that had belonged to his previous fiancee. The demon stone changed color just slightly in his hand.

"The stone has already taken on your color," he said thoughtfully.

"Why mine? The color hasn't changed since I got it."

"It has, I'm sure of it."

The demon stone fell back to my chest with a soft noise when Adalbert moved his hand away.

"It used to have a tinge of white. Where did you get it, anyway? Who gave it to you?"

The relationship between Adalbert and Conrad was well beyond shaky. Should I really just come straight out with the truth? But why would I lie?

"Right after I came to this world for the first time, I was given the stone as a talisman. Conrad gave it to me."

"I see."

"But don't take your frustrations out on Conrad! He's got enough problems right now!"

I felt the panic, exhaustion, and nausea rise up in me again. I desperately fought against the feeling of swelling hopelessness. Everything is okay. He's not dead. He's alive. Absolutely!

"Why? What's wrong with Conrad? Is he ill?"

"No, everything's great. Thanks for asking," I tried to gloss over the situation.

Luckily, Adalbert let it go. "And you are really a descendent of the Wincotts, the son of Susanna Julia?"

My god, of course not! I sighed.

"Robinson thought up all that nonsense. All that is totally impossible, of course. I never thought that anyone would take that pack of lies seriously. And especially from you, I wouldn't have expected that! After all, you knew Julia personally, right? So you should have noticed immediately that I look nothing like her."

"Yes, you're probably right," Adalbert murmured, as if he were having trouble convincing himself of it. He gazed at me with a flinty expression. "Too bad, seeing as that was the only reason I didn't kill you straight away."

"Wait a minute! Are you saying that now you don't have any reason not to do it?!"

"Yep, sure looks that way."

The hallway suddenly got loud. Through the open door, we heard a troop of men advancing. It was probably Flynn Gilbit and her soldiers.

"But it looks like I don't have time for that today," Adalbert said. "His Majesty, the weakling, appears to be quite a lucky devil."

Damn it, why did he of all people have to call me that? I was in danger of losing control over my tear ducts. I hastily covered my mouth, nose, and left eye with the flat of my hand. Why I felt this pressure all of a sudden, I had no idea.

Von Grantz shoved his companion onto the balcony. "Those soldiers are definitely not from around here," he said. "Judging from the sound of their military boots, they're from Big Simaron. Hey, Maxine! See to it that you get your ass out of here right now!"

Instead of extending his hand to help his companion, Adalbert heaved him up and threw him over the railing. With a long, drawn out cry, Nigel Weiz Maxine took his leave via a downward drop.

"Man, what floor is this, anyway? He could have broken his neck."

"Nah, he's impossible to kill." The certainty in his voice couldn't indicate anything good.

In the same moment that Adalbert jumped over the balcony's iron railing, Murata suddenly cried out, "Shibuya! They've got weapons!"

The door was ripped open and a solid dozen soldiers stormed in.

"Those are actually weapons, aren't they?!" Murata exclaimed.

All of a sudden I became pale as ash and was hit by a dizzy spell. Although I desperately tried to repress those memories, the terrible experience climbed back up into my thoughts. Soldiers with machines under their arms that looked like small super-dustbusters. Since their bodies were completely enshrouded and their faces were hidden by red-green masks, it was impossible to tell where they were from. A tremble ran through the top end of their weapons and blazing fireballs shot out. They were bigger than basketballs and steered directly towards their target and... Conrad was suddenly missing an arm.

"So it was you?" I said tonelessly.

It was true that these didn't wear red-green masks and weren't enshrouded, but they had the same weapons as back in the church.

"So it was you?!" I roared.

The man on the far right was irritated by my behavior for a moment. Then he took his target in his sights with his weapon. A tremor ran through the machine, a fireball shot out.

My instincts told me that I wasn't the target. But just the sight of those weapons made me nearly explode with anger.

"Shibuya!"

Murata threw himself against my hips.

It's fine, Murata. We don't need to take cover. They weren't aiming for me. And even if they were, they would never hit me.

I screamed.

My whole body was in pain. Something was tearing my arms and legs apart. Blood sprayed from my fingers. All my fingernails felt like they were being torn out. My spine was bent backwards. My head hung from my neck as if it were going to fall off at any moment. I was yanked back by the hair. Something shot hot and cold through my throat, my windpipe, and my intestines. Claws gripped at my heart and my head felt like it was on fire.

But I wasn't screaming in pain. I was screaming in anger.

One half of my field of vision was snow white, the other clear as glass. It was as if four rifle scopes were attached to my head. It seemed to me that I was in the center of a powerful sea. Through the pressure of the surging waves, everything was washed in water. The all-encompassing destructive frenzy of the waves swept the world away, but I myself was surrounded by a man-height, soft, clear wall.

There was something at my hips; it had grabbed onto me. I had to make sure it found shelter inside my protective wall. Otherwise the raging storm would immediately engulf it, throw it against a cliff, and crush it. And if it was no longer with me, I would lose the power to scream. And if I couldn't scream any more, my anger would go away, and without my anger, I wouldn't be who I am.

She walked along with bare feet.

The third story had been almost completely destroyed, even windows and walls had been broken through. Water fell from the ceiling to the floor unceasingly.

This was how it had been in the flood of the century, when the whole estate had been flooded. But no, if she remembered correctly, the water had only reached the second story then. The stone walls and ceilings had held out. Only the window panes and wood frames had been destroyed. It was nothing compared to the doomsday scenario that was playing out before her eyes at this moment.

But where had all that water come from all of a sudden? True, there was a great river in the area and it was only a short hop to the ocean. But this flood had simply fallen from the heavens and had only laid waste to the third story of the estate. Fountains were shooting every which way through the room.

Flynn Gilbit tucked up the hem of her dress, revealing her bare ankles. She stepped through the puddles of water, like on rainy days when she was a little girl.

"Was that the power of the Wincotts?"

History told of the ten races that had protected this world from the Creator Gods. And although they had obviously been from the same people, these people had been persecuted and driven out. So the race of the Wincotts had fled from Carolia to the west, had found a new homeland there, and had established a new nation.

A young soldier came running by with water pouring off of him. Flynn Gilbit looked at him with furrowed eyebrows -- couldn't he be a little quieter? Else he might wake the sleeping... *thing*.

"The ground floor and the second floor have taken very little damage. The only issue is the water dripping down."

So was this the power of demons? No wonder they were feared by men.

She stepped up to the iron railing on the balcony. There, one of the boys was huddled on the ground with a blank stare. For the first time, she noticed his hair and eyes were pitch black. The second boy was leaning on him, arm wrapped around his shoulders.

"How did your clothes stay dry?" Flynn asked.

The two boys had been at the center of the tidal wave.

"The water flowed around us," the blond answered. The other showed no reaction.

She tried to remember their names, but they had probably been false names anyway. Then she remembered again. One was called Crusoe, the other Robinson. They sounded almost like names from a child's picture book. No, they weren't fitting names for people with such immense powers.

Flynn called a powerfully built subordinate over and ordered him to take the two boys away. "No matter how they try to put their foot down, under no circumstances may they be placed in the same room. We must separate them. And take care not to injure either of them."

"But... S... Sir Norman...?" stuttered the soldier.

The reason the men looked so uncomfortable was the fact that Flynn was no longer wearing her mask. She was no longer Norman Gilbit, the masked prince.

"I understand," murmured the blond, still supporting the black-haired boy's head. "You were desperate for the office of the prince, isn't that true?"

He threw Flynn a glance as if he had seen through her completely. Almost imperceptibly, she shrank back.

"I won't allow you to use him for your crimes," the blond said.

"It's not my intention to use him for any sort of crimes."

"What are you really after, anyway? Land? Men? Money or oil?"

His right eye was blue, his left eye black as night. Presumably it wasn't real. There couldn't be that many who had black hair or black eyes.

"Or do you perhaps want to bring the entire world under your power?" asked the boy.

When one wants to bring the entire world under their power, many things will stand in their way.

CHAPTER 9

Chapter 9 by kannnichtfranz

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Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

Translated from the German edition by kannnichtfranz

Beta: Anonyskrit

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CHAPTER 9

They weren't the words he'd been expecting. Wolfram thought he had misunderstood.

"But why can't I go along?!"

"The search troops have already been assembled. They've been divided into seven lines of approach. Their objectives lay in the motherland Simaron, the autonomous as well as the occupied territories, and the islands. According to the latest facts and the results of the latest analyses, it was decided that the ships will set sail for Simaron this evening."

Lord von Voltaire unfolded a map on which the lines of approach were drawn. Out of the corners of his eyes, he threw a brief and grumpy glance towards the doll on the chair.

"If the situation here were different, I would be going myself. But someone has

to stay here and take care of the castle, now that Gunter finds himself in this condition."

Madam Butterfly, whose chin had fallen carelessly open, let her glance sweep around the room. The smile in her crescent-shaped eyes did not reflect her true feelings. If one looked closely, her gaze was actually somewhat threatening.

"Ceding the responsibility for the king's castle to a doll is out of the question," Gwendal said decisively.

"But I said that I want to go!" shouted Wolfram.

"In that case, I would have to confer the command of one of the search troops to you, and reassemble it anew. That would cost us unnecessary time. We don't have any time to lose."

"But none of that is necessary at all! I don't need a search team, I'll be fine on my own."

"I won't allow it."

"But why not?!"

"If you take part in the expedition, certain precautions would have to be taken. I forbid you to take part in this rescue mission. Now please don't give me any trouble, I really don't have time for that at the moment. Everything being done is in Yuri's best interests, and that's what you want, too." Then he issued further orders to his men.

"We still don't have an adjutant for the second troop. Who did Makalhin suggest for the position? Take people from Lord Weller's troops along. They're well versed in human culture. There's no reason to stand at attention, I'd rather see you hurry it up."

The young soldiers hastened back to their areas of responsibility. Wolfram watched his oldest brother with bloodshot eyes. He hadn't gotten a wink of sleep since yesterday but because of the tremendous tension, he wasn't feeling the fatigue.

"Is everything going according to plan with the third and fourth troops, the ones departing from Gyllenhal? Last I heard, Heathcliff intends to recruit a civilian as a go-between in Hildyaard, and an unofficial team will set forth from Cavalcade. The cards for relaying information will be deployed in this order: white, yellow, and red. Hammer that into your skulls, we can't make any mistakes! Lord von Bielefeld?"

"Yes?" Wolfram answered in surprise.

"Do you understand why I don't want you to go?"

"Because I lose my composure too easily and I always want to get my own way?"

"That is also a reason."

Wolfram clenched his fists tightly. "I'm not very discrete. I'm too emotional and in enemy territory, I won't be able to stay inconspicuous. Is that it?"

"Well, that is truly an accurate self-analysis. But that isn't the main reason."

"And that would be?"

Gwendal opened a button on his collar, pulled up a chair, and sat down. A shadow lay over his blue eyes.

"You'll have to find that out for yourself while you lend me a hand in the castle."

It was already late afternoon when Wolfram noticed Gisela leading a horse by the reins. He still hadn't felt like eating even a bite.

Despite his brother's veto, he had come to the decision to board a ship for Simaron. He had spoken with a few trustworthy soldiers discreetly. All of them were prepared to support his plan. A few had even volunteered to accompany him.

Still, the Bielefeld soldiers were first and foremost beholden to the Demon Empire. It was taken for granted that in the absence of the king, they would follow Lord von Voltaire's orders. If it became known that they acted contrary to his orders, their brave behavior would be seen as an act of betrayal.

Wolfram didn't want these respectable men with families to get into hot water just because he had a thick skull. As he walked along the stone path to the inner courtyard, musing, he encountered Gisela, stroking her horse's neck cheerfully as she made her way to the riding corral. She was accompanied by several men.

"Oh, Your Excellency! What a small world!"

In her dark brown hair, which was bound into a bun at her neck, a delicate silver hairpin sparkled.

"If you're looking for Gunter, he's with my brother. He perches on a stool and mutters indeterminate things to himself. Now and then he flings fire-red thunderbolts from his eyes."

Gisela laid her finger against the corner of her mouth and took on a worried expression.

"I am truly sorry that my father is conducting himself in such a creepy way."

"That's nothing you need to apologize for."

"Well, but he is still my father, who I'm otherwise so proud of. Madam Butterfly won't budge from the king's headquarters and Lady Anissina hovers over Snow

Gunter so much that I am not even allowed to care for him as a nurse. So I thought since no one seems to need anything here, I might as well indulge in a holiday trip for recuperation with a few of my adopted father's men. These men have always done so much for my father, and we've become friends. And we all love hot springs."

Wolfram knew two of the four men. Particularly the man with the bald head, who he'd seen around the castle all year. Was his name Dacascos?

The bulk of the soldiers who served under Lord von Kleist originally came from other units. The king's advisor could only give direct orders to the bodyguards and a small number of the castle guards. All of the other soldiers acted only in the name of the king.

These four men belonged to the small number of castle guards. It appeared that they hadn't received any orders, even given the ongoing emergency situation. They were generally not responsible for battle assignments, but rather for paperwork.

Wolfram let his gaze wander over Gisela's clothes and luggage. She wore an unpretentious rider's uniform of moss green and white. Her body was not decorated with gold or gemstones. Her luggage consisted only of a somewhat large backpack, and a leather pouch that hung off the saddle, presumably filled with rations.

"You say you want to visit the hot springs? With so little luggage?" Wolfram asked in surprise.

"Exactly, Your Excellency. It probably looks very unusual to you lords of the high nobility when a woman travels without a suitcase, right? But since I've spent many years of my life in the military, I prefer comfortable clothing and not having to worry if it gets dirty. After all, you don't want to have to watch your every step."

She introduced her companions one by one. The men stood at attention and saluted. Only the last one slouched his head and scrutinized the former prince with uncomfortably cold eyes.

As Wolfram was about to turn around and head back to the castle, Gisela grabbed his hand.

"We plan to travel by boat from Hildyaard to the three Viyah islands," she said. "Unfortunately, now is not the time for the Fire Festival. We might travel a bit further, if we find ourselves in the mood for it. In case our vacation takes a long time, please check in on my father, okay? Please let him know I would be sorry if he worried about me."

"I will let him know."

But why did she make it sound like she wasn't ever coming back? Did she perhaps want to elope with one of these men? When Wolfram had met her that morning in the Ancestral Temple of the Original King, it had seemed like her heart beat only for Conrad.

"Gisela!" Wolfram called her back. The penny had finally dropped for him.

The group stayed where they were with their horses, but turned back to him, backlit by the sunlight. The light flooded over Gisela's pale hair -- a special characteristic of her race -- and immersed her in delicate orange.

"Your Excellency?"

"May I come along?" Wolfram asked.

"Excuse me?"

"To the hot springs."

Wolfram searched through the pockets of his clothes. His fingertips hit upon a bundle of bank notes. It was the money he'd taken along for palm-greasing to the Ancestral Temple. This sum would easily allow for a trip of several months.

"Will you take me along?"

As if she had only been waiting for this request, Gisela stretched her right hand out to him.

"It would be our great honor."

"But this isn't going to be a luxury trip, Your Excellency!" chimed in the bald soldier.

The three Viyah Islands were situated at the western edge of the territory ruled by Simaron. Ships sailed from Van Noh Viyah towards the motherland. Wolfram asked himself how far this trip was meant to go -- presumably they all had the same goal.

At long last, Wolfram loosened his right fist. Inside lay the small shell design, moist with his sweat and half burned to black. Perhaps Gisela needed this object more than he himself did.

"This cuff link belonged to Conrad," he said.

"It's from his arm?"

"Yes. If you'd like to have it..."

Gisela took it between her fingertips, lifted it up to the light, and examined its shape. Then she laid it back in the hand of the younger brother.

"I think you are laboring under a misunderstanding, Your Excellency," she laughed joyfully, which she hadn't done for a very long time.

"Misunderstanding?"

"You surely think I have a certain kind of feelings for His Excellency Conrad, isn't that so?"

"Am I wrong then?"

She swung herself light-footedly into the saddle and rode ahead.

"I once gave a promise to a friend of mine that I want to make good on now. That's all."

Who was this friend supposed to be? And what kind of a promise? She surely didn't mean Yuri -- or did she?

Wolfram snatched the horse from a soldier who had been heading for the stables, and rode after the traveling party.

[CHAPTER 10](#)

Chapter 10 by kannnichtfranz

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Last chapter! It's short, but brace yourself...

Kyou Kara Maou

Japanese Novel 5 / German Novel 6: *Alone in Enemy Territory*

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CHAPTER 10

The moon had risen much higher in the heavens than when we had originally set foot on this estate.

I saw it now in the middle of a square window; it shone brightly into the room. Still condemned to immobility, I hazily imagined a Japanese flag with the aid of my useless brain.

An old, iron door creaked. I saw the toes of a woman approaching me. She was barefoot; that's why I hadn't noticed her at first.

"Captain Crusoe?"

Her voice was sweetly flirtatious. Her toenails, meticulously cared for, shone with the color of cherry blossoms. Flynn's beauty was utterly flawless.

"I want to apologize," she said, sitting on the edge of the bed I was laid out on.

Her hip length platinum blond hair only curled at the tips. It mixed with the shine of the moonlight and glistened like a silver stream bed.

"Forgive me that I must keep you locked up here. But you yourself are at fault in this situation. It's very impolite not to drink with the host at a meal. Your lips did not even touch the rim of your glass. And then that insolent man came!"

When Flynn spoke of Maxine, a curious hatred lay in her voice.

"I could get really angry over that guy! If he wasn't the henchman of the king, I would never have let him through the gates of my estate. He actually dared to assault my beloved servants -- with those dirty hands, stained with so much blood!"

She wasted no words on the fact that she herself hadn't made any attempt to rescue the maid. Had she perhaps already forgotten that?

"Don't misunderstand me, I've got nothing against you. It was just necessary to bring you under my power. I absolutely need a person in whose veins the blood of the Wincotts flows. I want you to do something for me. You are going to manipulate the stubborn and extremely tenacious 'key' to the box."

Manipulate a key? Me? And why the hell was I still supposed to be a member of the Wincott family? Flynn would surely not have believed this nonsense if I'd been introduced to her without sunglasses.

I imagined her face when she realized her mistake. Her pretty face would be contorted with blackest anger. This thought brightened my gloomy mood a little.

"Here, drink this," she said.

Even just speaking cost me a lot of effort. Without moving my head, I threw Flynn a suspicious glare. She shook her head with a friendly smile.

"Don't worry, I haven't poisoned it. We need the Wincotts in order to deploy this particular substance which your ancestors first produced. I've never entertained even the remotest thoughts of killing you. You are an important component of a powerful weapon. Only you can make this key into your marionette."

She pressed the elegantly adorned glass to my lips at an angle and attempted to drizzle the alcoholic drink into my throat. When Flynn figured out that it wouldn't work with me lying down, she took a sip of the red wine into her own mouth and bent over my face with her eyes closed.

I felt her soft lips.

"Sleep now. You need a lot of rest."

The cold fingers that had rested on my cheek let go, taking the heat from my skin with them. They seemed to regret the end of this contact a little.

The woman turned her back to the moonlight and left the room quietly. I heard the metallic noise of the lock and how she spoke with the guards. Then the master of the house disappeared for good.

I rolled myself frantically around in the bed. I was finally able to roll onto the floor. I crawled to the window on my elbows and knees and watched my shadow looming on the floor.

The moon was pale, white and bright.

I didn't want to lie in the darkness any more.

When offered food, I shouldn't just take it casually. I had forgotten that security measure until now. I'd never had to worry about it, because there'd always been

someone there watching out for me. But now there was nobody who could test the food for me.

I forced myself to stick my pointer finger down my throat, and vomited the complete contents of my stomach out again. Due to the painful cramps, the exertion, and my anger, tears ran down my nose.

Did I do right, Gunter? Am I okay now?

Just keeping my eyes open was already the purest torture. It was as if, in this moment, the very last quantum particle of willpower had been pressed out of me. Then I went to sleep. It felt as if I was dragged into a pitch black swamp.

When morning breaks and the sun goes up outside the window, I want to wake up under my own power.

In my dreams, Gunter and Conrad were doing well. Only I stood alone in a faraway place. A song was coming from the box in my hand. But when I held my breath and pricked my ears, it was only the cry of the wind.

END OF BOOK 6